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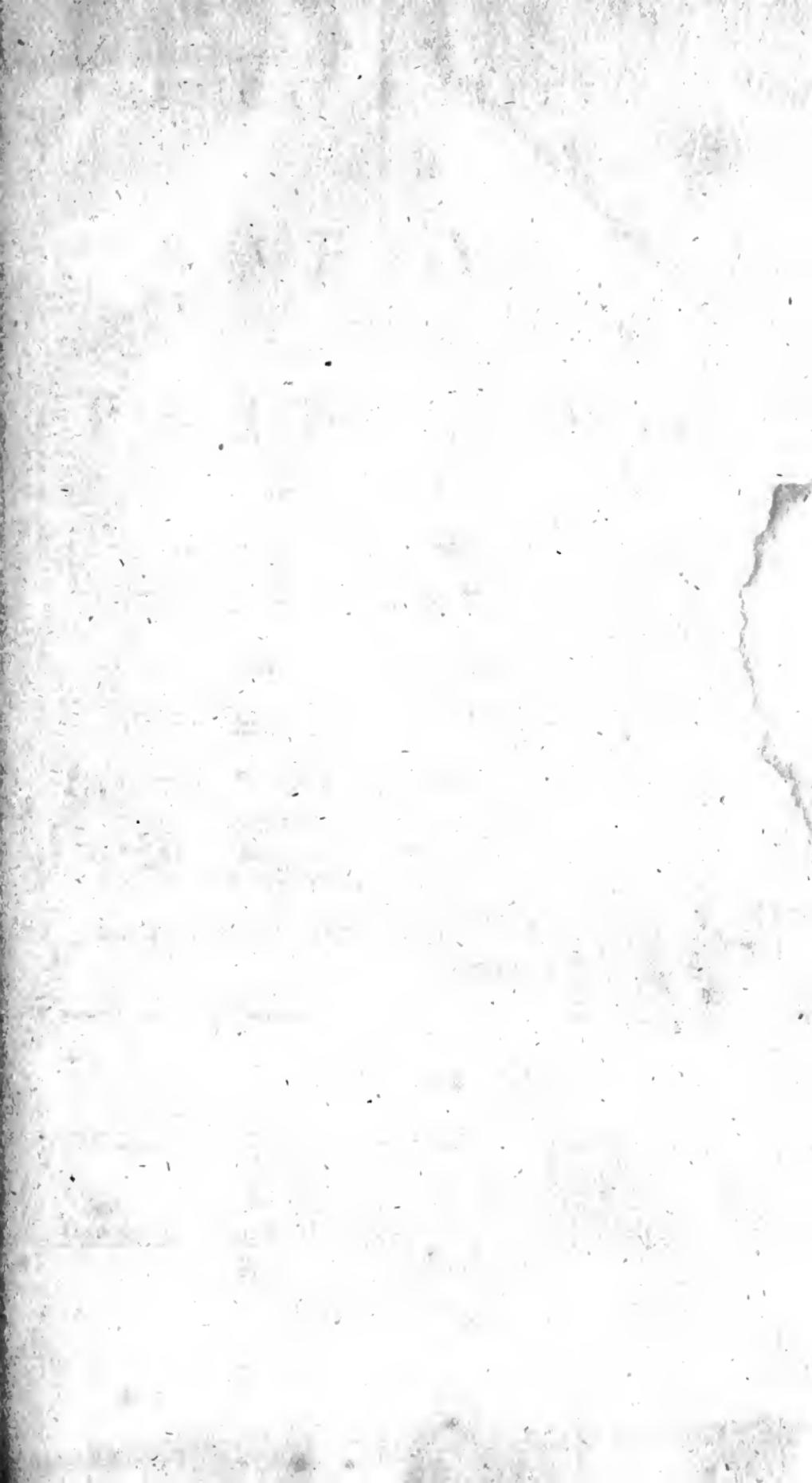
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CRITICAL REFLECTIONS
O N
P O E T R Y
A N D
P A I N T I N G.

Written in FRENCH

By M. l'Abbé Du Bos, Member and perpetual
Secretary of the FRENCH ACADEMY.

Translated into ENGLISH by

THOMAS NUGENT, Gent.

*From the fifth Edition revised, corrected, and
enlarged by the Author.*

Ut pictura poesis erit. —

HOR. de arte poet.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN NOURSE, at the Lamb, opposite
Katherine-Street in the Strand.

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CRITICAL



CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON POETRY and PAINTING.

PART II.

C H A P. I.

Of Genius in general.

THE sublimity of poetry and painting consists in moving and pleasing, as that of eloquence in persuading. 'Tis not sufficient (says Horace in a legislative style, in order to add more weight to his decision,) that your verses be elegant, they must also be capable of moving the heart, and of inspiring it with such sentiments as they intend to excite.

*Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunt,
Et quocunque volent animum auditoris agunto.*

HOR. de arte.

*'Tis not enough, that plays are neatly wrought,
Exactly form'd, and of an even plot,
They must be taking too, surprize, and seize,
And force our souls which way the writers please.*

CREECH.

Horace would have addressed himself in the same manner to painters.

'Tis impossible for either a poem, or picture, to produce this effect, unless they have some other merit besides that of the regularity and elegance of execution. The best drawn picture imaginable, or a poem disposed in the most regular manner, and written with the greatest accuracy of style, may prove frigid and tiresom. In order to render a work affecting, the elegance of design and the truth of coloring, if a picture; and the richness of versification, if a poem, ought to be employed in displaying such objects as are naturally capable of moving and pleasing ^a.

If the heroes of a tragic poet do not engage me by their characters and adventures, the play grows tiresom, though it be written with the greatest purity of style, and the exactest conformity to the rules of the stage. But if the poet relates such adventures, and exhibits such situations and characters, as are equally interesting as those of Pyrrhus and Paulina, his poem calls forth my tears, and obliges me to acknowledge the artist as a divine performer, who has so great a command over my heart.

^a *Ars enim cum a natura profecta sit, nisi natura moveat & delectet, nihil sanè egisse videatur.* Cic. lib. 3. de Oratōrē.

*Ille per extensum funem mibi posse videtur
Ire poeta, meum qui peccus inaniter angit,
Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet.*

HOR. ep. I. l. 2.

*I fairly grant those poets wit, that rule
My passions as they please, disturb my soul ;
And then by a short turn my thoughts relieve :
Whose lively fiction makes me laugh or grieve ;
Whose well-wrought scenes nat'ral and just appear ;
I see the place, and fancy I am there.*

CREECH.

The resemblance therefore between the ideas, which the poet draws from his own genius, and those which men are supposed to have in the situation in which he represents his personages, the pathetic likewise of the images he has formed before he took either pen or pencil in hand, constitute the chief merit of poems and pictures. 'Tis by the design and the invention of ideas and images, proper for moving us, and employed in the executive part, that we distinguish the great artist from the plain workman, who frequently excels the former in execution. The best versifiers are not the greatest poets, as the most regular designers are far from being the greatest painters.

The works of eminent masters are seldom long examined, before we find that they considered the regularity and graces of execution not as the ultimate end of their art, but only as means for displaying beauties of a much superior nature.

They conform to rules, in order to gain our minds by a continued probability ; a probability capable of making us forget, that 'tis a mere fiction which

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softens our hearts. They display the beauties of execution, to prevent us in favor of their personages by external elegance, or the charms of language. They chuse to fix our senses on such objects, as are designed to move our souls. This is the end an orator proposes to himself, when he submits to the precepts of grammar and rhetoric : his principal aim is not to be commended for the correctness and elegance of his composition, things that have no persuasive virtue ; but to bring us over to his opinion by the force of his arguments, or by the pathetic of those images, which his invention furnishes, and whereof his art supplies him only with the oeconomical management.

Now a person must be born with a genius, to know how to invent ; but to be able to invent well, requires a long and unwearied application. A man who invents ill, and executes without judgment, does not, as Quintilian ^a observes when speaking of invention, even so much as merit the name of an inventer. The rules which have been hitherto reduced to method, are guides that point out the way only at a distance ; and 'tis merely by the help of experience, that men of a happy genius learn from thence, how to make a practical application of the concise maxims of those laws and their general precepts. Observe always the pathetic (say these rules) and never let your spectators or auditors grow heavy or tired. Fine maxims indeed ! but a person born without a genius understands nothing of the nature of the precept they contain ; and even the greatest

^a *Ego perro nec invenisse quidem credo cum qui non judicavit.*
QUINT. Inst. orat. I. 3. c. 3.

genius does not learn in a day's time to make a proper application of them. 'Tis fit therefore we treat here of the genius and studies requisite to form painters and poets.

If our artists happen to want that divine enthusiasm, which renders painters poets, and poets painters, if they have not, as Monsieur Perrault expresses it^a,

*Ce feu, cette divine flâme,
L'esprit de notre esprit, & l'ame de notre ame.*

*That fire, that flame divine,
Soul of our souls, and substance of our minds.*

they must continue all their lives in the low rank of journeymen, who are paid for their daily hire, but are far from deserving the consideration and rewards which polite nations owe to illustrious artists. They belong to that class of men, of whom Cicero says^b, that *they are paid for their work, not for their skill*. What little they know of their profession, they have learnt by rote, just as one might learn any other mechanic business. Men of the most ordinary capacities may become indifferent painters and poets.

Genius is an aptitude, which man has received from nature to perform well and easily, that which others can do but indifferently, and with a great deal of pains. We learn to execute things for which we have a genius, with as much facility as we speak our own mother-tongue.

A man born with a genius for commanding an army, and capable of becoming a great general by

^a *Epistle on genius to Monsieur de Fontenelle.*

^b *Quorum opera, non quorum artes emuntur. Cic. de offic. I. i.*

the help of experience, is one whose organical conformation is such, that his valor is no obstruction to his presence of mind, and his presence of mind makes no abatement of his valor. He is a man endowed with a sound judgment and lively imagination, who preserves the free use of these two faculties in the ebullition of blood, that succeeds immediately after the chillness, which the first view of great perils throws into human breasts; in the same manner as heat follows cold in the accesses of an ague. In the midst of the ardor which makes him forget his danger, he sees, he deliberates, and resolves, as if he were tranquil and serene in his tent. He discovers therefore in an instant a wrong motion made by the enemy, which other officers much older than himself would have looked at a long time, before they could have discovered the motive or defect.

Such a disposition of mind, as I have here spoke of, cannot be acquired by art; it can be possessed only by a person, who has brought it with him into the world. The apprehension of death intimidates those who are not animated at the sight of the enemy; and those who are too much animated, lose that presence of mind so necessary for discerning distinctly what passes, and discovering justly what is most expedient. Let a man have ever so great abilities in cool blood, he can never be a good general, if the sight of the enemy renders him, either fiery, or timorous. Hence such numbers of people who reason so well on military affairs in their closets, perform so indifferently in the field. Hence such multitudes of men spend their whole lives in the art of war, without attaining the capacity of commanding.

I am not ignorant that honor and emulation frequently induce men, who are naturally timorous, to take the same steps, and use the same external demonstrations, as those who are born brave. In like manner men of the greatest impetuosity and fire obey their officers, when they are forbidden to advance where their ardor leads them. But men have not the same command over their imaginations, as over their limbs. Wherefore, tho' military discipline may be capable of restraining the impetuous within their ranks, and of making the timorous stand to their posts ; yet it cannot prevent the inward confusion of either of them, nor with-hold the souls of the former from advancing, or the hearts of the latter from retiring. Neither of them are any longer capable of having that liberty of mind and imagination in danger, which even the Romans themselves commended in Hannibal^a. This is what we call being every where present during the time of action.

What has been here said of the art of war, may be equally applied to all other professions. The administration of great concerns, the art of putting people to those employments for which they are naturally formed, the study of physic, and even gaming itself, all require a genius. Nature has thought fit to make a distribution of her talents amongst men, in order to render them necessary to one another ; the wants of men being the very first link of society. She has therefore pitched upon particular persons to give them an aptitude to perform rightly some things, which she has rendered impossible to others ; and

^a *Plurimum consilii inter ipsa pericula.* Livius 1. 2.

the latter have a facility granted them for other things, which facility has been refused the former. Some have a sublime and extensive genius in a particular sphere, while others have received the talent of application in the same sphere; a talent so necessary for managing the execution. If the latter stand in need of the former to direct them, the former want likewise the latter to execute their directions. Nature indeed has made an unequal distribution of her blessings amongst her children, yet she has disinherited none, and a man divested of all kind of abilities is as great a phænomenon as an universal genius. It has been observed by the most celebrated master that ever appeared in the art of instructing children¹, that men void of all abilities are as rare to be met with as monsters.

Providence seems even to have rendered peculiar talents and inclinations more common amongst some people than others, in order to introduce that mutual dependence between different nations, which she has so carefully established between individuals. Those wants which engage individuals to form societies, induce also nations to settle a mutual correspondence. It has been therefore the Divine will, that nations should be obliged to make an exchange of talents and industry with one another, in the same manner as they exchange the different products of their countries, to the end that they should have recourse to each other, for the very same motive which induces individuals to enter into society in order to

• Hebetes vero & indociles non magis secundum natures hominis eduntur, quam prodigiosa corpora & monstris insighia. QUINT. l. i. cap. i.

form one body of people; which is, the want of being well, or the desire of being better.

From the diversity of genius the difference of inclination arises in men, whom nature has had the precaution of leading to the employments for which she designs them, with more or less impetuosity, in proportion to the greater or lesser number of obstacles they have to surmount, in order to render themselves capable of answering this vocation. Thus the inclinations of men are so very different, only by reason that they all follow the same mover, that is, the impulse of their genius.

*Castor gaudet equis, ovo prognatus eodem,
Pugnis, quot capitum vivunt totidem studiorum
Millia.* HOR. sat. 1. l. 2.

*Pollux on foot, on horseback Castor fights ;
As many men, so many their delights.* CREECH.

" Whence arises this difference? Go and inquire,
" says the same philosopher, of the genius of each
" person, which alone is able to answer your ques-
" tion : every individual has his particular genius
" different from that of others, and in some there is
" as great a difference as between black and white."

*Scit genius natale comes qui temperat astrum
Naturæ Deus humanae, mortalis in unum
Quodque caput, vultu mutabilis, albus & ater.* HOR. ep. 2. l. 2.

*That genius only knows, that's wont to wait
On birth-day stars, the guider of our fate,
Our nature's God, that doth his influence shed,
Easy to any shape, or good, or bad.* CREECH.

This

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This is what renders some poets pleasing, even when they trespass against rules, whilst others are disagreeable, notwithstanding their strict regularity. The character, which men bring with them into the world, causes some, as Quintilian observes^a, to please us even with their failings, whilst others displease us in spite of their good qualities.

My subject will not permit me to expatiate any longer on the difference of genius in men and nations. Those who are desirous of further instruction on this article, and of improving the natural instinct which teaches us the knowledge of mankind, may read *the examen of minds* by Huarté, and *the portraiture of the characters of men, ages, and nations* by Barclay. A person may profit very much by the perusal of these works, tho' they do not merit the entire confidence of the reader; but my business is to treat only of the genius which forms painters and poets.

CHAP. II.

'Of the genius which forms painters and poets.'

THE genius of these arts consists, as I apprehend, in a happy arrangement of the organs of the brain, in a just conformation of each of these organs, as also in the quality of blood which disposes it to ferment during exercise, so as to furnish a plenty of spirits to the springs employed in the functions

^a In quibusdam virtutes non habent gratiam, in quibusdam virtutia ipsa delectant. QUINT. Inst. l. ii. c. 3.

POETRY and PAINTING. ii

of the imagination. In fact, the excessive lassitude and wasting of spirits, which attend a long application of mind, are sufficient to evince, that the fatigues of the imagination considerably exhaust the strength of the body. I have supposed here, that the composer's blood is heated ; for indeed painters and poets cannot invent in cool blood ; nay 'tis evident they must be wrapt into a kind of enthusiasm when they produce their ideas. Aristotle mentions a poet, who never composed so well, as when his poetic fury hurried him into a kind of frenzy. The admirable pictures we have in Tasso of Armida and Clorinda, were drawn at the expence of a disposition he had to real madness, into which he fell before he died. Apollo has his drunkenness as well as Bacchus. *Do you imagine, says Cicero^a, that Pacuvius wrote in cool blood? No, it was impossible. He must have been inspired with a kind of fury, to be able to write such admirable verses.*

But the very happiest fermentation of the blood can produce nothing but chimerical ideas in a brain composed of vicious or ill-disposed organs ; which are consequently incapable of representing nature to a poet, such as it appears to other men. The copies he draws of nature have no resemblance, because his glass (to use this expression) is untrue. Now creeping along the ground, and now soaring above the clouds, if he happens sometimes to touch the truth, 'tis merely by accident. Such were amongst us the

^a *Pacuvium putatis in scribendo leni animo ac remissio fuisse? fieri nullo modo potuit; sæpe enim audiri poetam bonum neminem, sine inflammatione animorum existere posse, & sine quodam afflato quasi furoris.* Cic. de orat. l. 3.

authors of the poems on St Mary Magdalen and St Lewis, both of them full of poetic rapture, tho' never representing nature, because they copied her entirely from the whimsical empty notions they had formed in their own extravagant imaginations: They both strayed equally wide, tho' by different roads, from the resemblance of truth.

On the other hand, if a brain furnished with a good disposition of organs should want that fire, which proceeds from a warm blood full of spirits, its productions will indeed be regular, but flat withal and insipid.

Impetus ille jacet, vatum qui pectora nutrit.

OVID de Pont. l. 4. el. 2.

The fire is spent, which warms the poet's breast.

If the poetic fire warms him sometimes, it is soon extinguished, and throws out only a glimmering light. Hence 'tis said, that a man of wit is able to write a stanza, but he must be born a poet to be capable of writing three. Those who are not born poets, are soon out of breath when they attempt to climb up Parnassus. They have a glimpse of what they ought to make their personages say, but they cannot form any distinct notion thereof, and much less express it. They remain frigid, while they endeavour to engage us. *Nervi deficiunt animique.*

When the right quality of blood unites with a happy disposition of organs, this favourable concurrence constitutes, methinks, a picturesque or poetic genius; for I distrust all physical explications, considering the imperfection of this science, in which we are continually obliged to have recourse to conjecture. But

the

the facts I have here explained, are certain, and these facts, tho' not so easily accounted for, are sufficient to support my system. I fancy therefore that this happy assemblage is, physically speaking, that divinity which the poets say dwells within their breasts.

*Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo,
Impetus hic sacræ semina mentis habet.*

OVID. fast. l. i.

*Within us dwells a God, who gives us fire ;
And seeds of life divine our souls inspire.*

'Tis in this that divine fury consists, so often mentioned by the ancients ; on which a modern writer composed a learned treatise about fifty-five years ago ^a. This is what Montagne meant by the following words ^b : *Why should not those poetic sallies, which transport their author beyond himself, be ascribed to his happy fate, since he acknowledges, that they surpass his strength, and that they come not from himself, nor are they in any manner subject to his power ? The same may be said of painting, where some strokes happen to drop from the painter's hand, which are so superior to his own conception and knowledge, as to throw him into admiration and surprize.*

This happy fate consists in being born with a genius. Genius is the fire which elevates painters above themselves, and enables them to infuse a soul into their figures, and motion into their compositions. 'Tis the enthusiasm which seizes poets, when they behold the graces skipping along the meadows, where others see nothing but flocks of sheep. Hence their vein happens not to be always at their own disposal.

^a *Petitus de furore poetico.*

^b *Essays, book 1. chap. 23.*

Hence likewise their spirit seems to abandon them sometimes ; and at other times to pull them by the ear, as Horace expresses it, to oblige them to write or paint. Our genius, as we shall explain more at large in the course of these reflections, ought to feel the effect of all those alterations, to which our machine is rendered so subject by several unknown causes. Happy those painters and poets, who have a particular command over their genius, who break loose from the enthusiasm when they leave off work, and who never bring with them into company the drunkenness of Parnassus.

'Tis sufficiently evinced by experience, that all men are not born with talents proper for rendering them poets or painters : We have several instances of those, whom a labor, continued for the space of many years rather with obstinacy than perseverance, could never raise above the degree of simple versifiers. We have seen likewise men of very good parts, who after having copied several times the most sublime productions in painting, have waxed old with their pencil and pallet in hand, without ever rising higher than the rank of indifferent colorists and servile imitators.

Men born with the genius which forms the great general, or the magistrate worthy of enacting laws, frequently die before their abilities are discovered. A person possessed of such a genius cannot display it, unless he be called to those employments for which he is qualified ; and he frequently dies before he is intrusted with them. Supposing even that he happens to be born within such a distance of these employments, as to be able to reach them in the course of

human

human life, he oftentimes wants the art necessary for acquiring them. Tho' he is capable of exercising them with dignity, yet he is incapable of following the road which in his days leads to their attainment. Genius is almost constantly attended with a kind of loftiness and grandeur. I do not mean that which consists in tone and air; for this is no more than a surly look which indicates a narrow mind, and renders a man as contemptible in the eye of a philosopher, as a footman dressed in a discarded minister's livery is in the eyes of courtiers. I mean that loftiness which consists in the nobleness of the sentiments, and in an elevation of mind which fixes a just price on the preferments to which we aspire, as also on the trouble which a person must be at to obtain them; especially if he is obliged to apply to persons whom he does not consider as competent judges of merit. In fine, men are qualified by virtues to fill the most eminent places, but it frequently happens in all ages, that the way to obtain them is by meanness and vice. There are consequently a great many geniuses, born with a capacity for the highest employments, who die without having ever had an opportunity of shewing their talents. Thus a person born with military or political talents has not been intrusted with the command of armies, or with the government of provinces: and a man born with a genius for architecture, has been refused the direction of a structure in which he might have displayed his abilities.

Men who have a talent for poetry or painting are not of the number of those who depend, as it were, on the smiles and good-will of fortune, to make their appearance

appearance in public. Fortune cannot deprive them of the helps that are requisite for making their abilities known : This we shall explain here more at large.

The mechanic part of painting is very laborious, but it is not unsurmountable to those who are born with a genius for that art. They are supported against the disagreeableness thereof by the allurement of a profession for which they find themselves qualified, and by the sensible advancement they make in their studies. Novices in the art find every where masters, whose direction contributes to shorten their journey. Be they eminent or indifferent masters in their professions, it does not signify ; a disciple that has a genius will always benefit by their instructions. 'Tis enough for him that they are capable of teaching him the practical part of the art, which they cannot be ignorant of, after having professed it ten or a dozen years. An able scholar learns to perform well, by seeing his master perform ill. The force of genius changes the most ill-digested precepts into right nourishment : It enables a person to do that best, which he has learnt of no body but himself. *Lessons given by masters*, says Seneca^a, are like grains of seeds. The quality of the fruit which the seeds produce, depends principally on that of the soil, in which they have been sown. The very poorest produces good fruit in an excellent soil. Thus when precepts have been sown in a well-disposed mind, they shoot up most beautifully, and the mind brings

^a *Eadem præceptorum ratio, quæ seminum ; multum efficiunt, et si angusta sint ; tantum, ut dixi, idonea mens accipiat illa, & in se trahat, multa invicem generabit, & plus præstet quam acceperit,*
SEN. ep. 38.

forth, as it were, a better sort of grain than that which was sown. How many eminent men, in all kinds of professions, have learnt the first elements of the arts which raised them to immortality, from masters whose sole reputation is that of having had such illustrious disciples?

Thus Raphael, instructed by a painter of a middling rank, but supported by his own genius, raised himself much above his master after a few years practice. He had only occasion for Pietro Perugino's lessons to initiate him. The same may be said of Annibal Caraccio, of Rubens, Poussin, Le Brun, and other painters, whose genius we so much admire.

With respect to poets, the principles of their art are so very easy to be understood, and carried into execution, that they do not even so much as want a master to point out the method of studying them. A man of genius may learn of himself in two months time all the rules of French poetry. He is even capable of tracing these rules in a short time to their very source, and of judging of the importance of each by those principles which first established them. Wherefore the public never fixed any idea of glory to the chance of teaching the elements of poetry to scholars, who have afterwards filled succeeding ages with the fame of their reputation. There has never been any mention made of the masters, who first taught Virgil or Horace the art of poetry. We do not even so much as know who shewed Moliere and Corneille, tho' so near our own days, the cæsura and measure of our verse. Those masters are not supposed to have had a sufficient

ficient share in the glory of their disciples, to merit our giving ourselves the trouble of inquiring and retaining their names.

C H A P. III.

That the impulse of genius determines men to be painters or poets.

THERE is no great merit in being the first to induce a young poet to take pen in hand, his very genius would have made him take it. A genius does not depend merely on the solicitation of friends, to shew himself to the public. He is not discouraged, because his first essays have not succeeded; he pushes on with perseverance, and makes his way at length across the heedlessness and wanderings of youth.

'Tis not employments of too elevated, or too low a nature; nor an education which seems to remove a man of genius from an application to things for which he has a talent; nor any thing else in fine, that can hinder him from shewing at least the sphere of his genius, tho' he happens not to fill it. Whatever is proposed to him as the object of his application, can never fix him, unless it be that which nature has allotted him. He never lets himself be diverted from hence for any length of time, and is always sure to return to it, in spite of all opposition, nay sometimes in spite of himself. Of all impulses, that of nature, from whom he has received his inclinations, is much the strongest.

Custode

Custode & curâ natura potentior omni.

Juv. sat. 10.

*For nature is a better guardian far,
Than sawcy pedants, or dull tutors are.*

DRYDEN.

Every thing is converted into pallets and pencils in the hands of a boy endowed with a genius for painting. He makes himself known to others for what he is, when he does not yet know it himself.

The Annalists of painting relate a vast number of facts in confirmation of what I have here asserted. The most eminent painters were not born in the shops or work-houses of their profession. There are very few painters sons, who, pursuant to the common custom of other arts, have been bred up in their fathers profession. Among the illustrious artists who reflect so great an honor on the two last centuries, Raphael was the only one, as far as I can remember, that was son to a painter. Giorgione's, and Titian's parents, as well as those of Leonardo da Vinci, and Paolo Veronese, never handled either pencil or chisel. Michael Angelo's father, according to common fame, was of a very good extraction, and lived without practising any lucrative profession. Andrea del Sarto was a taylor's son, and Le Tintoret son of a dyer. The father of the Caraccio's did not profess handling a pencil. Michael Angelo di Caravaggio was a mason's son, and Correggio's father a plowman. Guido was the son of a musician, Dominichino of a shoemaker, and Albano of a mercer. Lanfranco was a foundling, who learned to paint of his own genius, almost in the same manner as Pas-

chal learnt the mathematics. Rubens's father had neither shop nor workhouse, but was one of the magistrates of Antwerp. The father of Van dyke was neither painter nor sculptor. Fresnoy, who has favoured us with a poem on the art of painting, which has merited a translation and notes from Monsieur de Pile; and has left us also several good pictures, was bred a physician. The parents of the four best French painters of the last century, Valentine, le Sueur, Poussin, and le Brun, were not painters. The genius of those great men went, as it were, in search of them to their parents house, to conduct them thence to Parnassus : For painters ascend Parnassus as well as poets.

Poets who have attained to any degree of fame, are still a stronger instance of what I have advanced concerning the impulse of genius. There never would have been a poet, had not the force of genius determined particular men to the profession ; for never was a parent known, that designed his son for this employment. Besides, those who are charged with the education of a boy of sixteen, endeavour always, for a very obvious reason, to divert him from poetry, as soon as he shews an extraordinary passion for this art. Ovid's father was not satisfied with bare remonstrances, in order to extinguish the poetic fire of his son ; but such was the force of genius, that our little Ovid is said to have promised in verse to leave off making verses, when he was whipt for this passion. Horace's first profession was that of bearing arms : Virgil was a sort of a jockey ; at least we read in his life, that he made himself known to Augustus by his secrets

crets for the curing of horses, for which this great poet was introduced into this emperor's stables. But to wave any further instances drawn from ancient history, let us reflect on the vocation of the poets of our own times. Examples drawn from facts whose circumstances are distinctly known, will be much more effectual than those that are borrowed from past ages ; and we shall be easily induced to believe, that what has happened to the poets of our days, happened in like manner to those of all ages.

The most eminent French poets, who honoured the reign of Lewis XIV. were by birth and education remote from the profession of poetry. None of them had been engaged in the employment of instructing youth, nor in any of those occupations, which lead a man of genius insensibly to Parnassus. On the contrary, they seemed to have been kept at a great distance from thence, either by professions they had already engaged in, or by employments, for which their birth and education designed them. Moliere's father brought his son up an upholsterer ; and Peter Corneille wore a counsellor's gown, when he wrote his first pieces. Quinault was clerk to a lawyer, when he gave himself up to his inclination for poetry ; for his first comic essays were wrote on papers half dawbed over with lawyers scrollings. Racine wore an ecclesiastic habit, when he composed his three first tragedies. The reader will find no difficulty in believing, that the retired gentlemen, who bred Racine up from his infancy, and were intrusted with the care of his education, never encouraged him to write for the stage. On the contrary, they left

no stone unturned to extinguish the violent ardor he had for rhyming. Monsieur le Maitre, who had him particularly under his care, was as diligent in concealing from him all sorts of books of French poetry, as soon as he discovered his inclination that way; as Paschal's father was careful in keeping his son from the knowledge of any thing that might lead him to think of geometry. La Fontaine's employment among the waters and forests ought to have destined him for the planting and cutting of trees, and not for making them speak. If Monsieur L'Huillier, Chapelle's father, could have directed the occupations of his son, he would have applied him to any thing rather than poetry. In fine, every body knows by heart the verses, in which Boileau, who was son, brother, uncle, and cousin to a recorder, gives an account of his vocation from the dust of the rolls to the smiling verdure of Parnassus. All these great men are a convincing proof, that 'tis nature, not education, as Cicero observes, which forms the poet. Without ascending higher than our own times, let us cast an eye on the history of other professions that require a particular genius. We shall find that the greatest part of those who have distinguished themselves in these professions, were not engaged therein by the counsels or impulse of their parents, but by their own natural inclination. Nanteuil's parents used the same endeavors to hinder him from being an engraver, as the generality of parents employ to ingage their children to

Poetam natura ipsa valere & mentis viribus excitari, et quasi divino quodam spiritu afflari. Cic. pro Arch. poet.

a particular profession. He was obliged sometimes to climb up into a tree, and conceal himself there in order to exercise himself in drawing.

Le Fevre, born an algebraist and great astronomer, began to exercise his genius, when he followed a weaver's trade at Lisieux. The very threads of his loom contributed to improve him in the knowledge of numbers. Roberval, while tending his sheep, could not escape the influence of his star, which had destined him to be a great geometrician. He was learning geometry before he knew there was any such science. He was occupied in drawing lines and figures on the ground with his crook, when a person chanced to pass by, who taking notice of the child's amusement, undertook to procure him an education more suitable to his talents, than that which he received from the peasant he lived with. The adventure which happened to Monsieur Paschal has been published by so many different hands, that it is known all over Europe. His father, far from exciting him to the study of geometry, very industriously concealed from him whatever might give him an idea of this science; from an apprehension of his growing too fond of that study. But he found that the child had attained by mere dint of genius to understand several propositions of Euclid. Deprived of guide or master, he had already made a most surprizing progress in geometry, without having any notion of studying that science.

The parents of Monsieur Tournefort tried every method imaginable to divert him from pursuing the study of botany. He was obliged, when

he had a mind to go a simpling, to conceal himself, as other children hide themselves to lose their time at play. Monsieur Bernoulli, a gentleman of a very great reputation even from his youth, and who died thirty-five years ago professor of mathematics in the university of Basil, gave himself up to the study of this science, notwithstanding the long and continual efforts his father used to divert him from it. He used to hide himself to study the mathematics, which made him afterwards take for his device, a Phaeton with these words : *Invito patre sidera verso. Thro' stars I roll against my father's will.* This inscription is at the bottom of his portrait in the library of the city of Basil. Let the reader please to recollect here likewise all that he has read and heard from ocular witnesses, concerning this very subject. I should tire his patience, were I to relate all the facts that can be alledged to prove, that there is no obstacle unsurmountable to the impulse of genius. Was it not against his parent's inclination, that the modern writer of the life of Philip Augustus and Charles VII.^a applied himself to the composing of history ; a task for which he was blest with such eminent talents ? Would Hercules, Soliman, and several other theatrical pieces have been ever composed, had not the genius of their authors used violence to oblige them to fall into the occupation they fancied most, in spite of the education they received, and the profession they embraced ? What if we were to quit awhile the republic of letters, in order to run thro' the history of other professions, and especially of great generals ? Is it not

^a Monsieur Baudot de Julli receiver of the land tax at Sarlat commonly

commonly in opposition to the advice of their parents, that those who are not born in a military family, venture to embrace the profession of arms?

Mens birth may be considered two different ways. First with regard to their physical conformation, and the natural inclinations which result from thence. Secondly with respect to the fortune and condition in which they are born as members of a particular society. Now the physical birth always prevails over the moral one. This requires a little explication. Education, which is incapable of giving a particular genius or inclination to children that have it not from nature, is unable likewise to deprive them of this genius, or to strip them of this inclination, if they have brought it with them into the world. Children are constrained only for a certain time, by the education they receive in consequence of their moral birth; but the inclinations that arise from their physical nativity, last with a greater or lesser degree of vivacity as long as life itself. They are the effect of the construction and arrangement of our organs, and incessantly impel us where our propensity leads us.

Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.

HORAT.

Strive to expel strong nature, 'tis in vain,

With double force she will return again,

And conquering rise above the proud disdain.

CREECH.

Besides, these inclinations are in their highest vigor and impetuosity exactly at that very period of life, in which we are freed from the constraint of education.

C H A P. IV.

Objection against the preceding proposition, and answer to the objection.

IT will be objected here, that I have not a just idea of what passes in society, if I imagine that all genius's answer their vocation. You know not (some will say) that the necessities of life inslave, as it were, the greatest part of mankind to that condition of life in which they were educated from their infancy. Now the misery of these conditions must stifle a great number of genius's, who would have distinguished themselves, had they been so happy as to have been born in a more elevated situation.

*Ut saepe summa ingenia in occulto latent !
Hic qualis imperator, nunc privatus est.*

PLAUT. capt. act. 1. scen. 2.

*How oft are great abilities conceal'd
From public view ! how mean a garment hides
A genius fit for stratagems of war ?*

The greatest part of mankind being put out from their infancy to low mechanic trades, wax old in life before they have an opportunity of attaining to a proper degree of learning; in order to enable their genius to take wing. Some will tell me, perhaps in a pathetic strain, that yon poor coachman in tattered rags, who gets his wretched livelihood by lashing to death a pair of meagre starved horses, tied to a rotten coach just ready to fall to pieces, would have been

been perhaps a Raphael or a Virgil, had he been so fortunate as to have been born of a genteel family, and received an education proportioned to his natural talents.

I have already granted, that those who are born with a genius for the command of armies, or for any other great employments, and even if you will, for architecture, cannot display their abilities, unless they have a lift from fortune, and are seconded by lucky conjunctures. Wherefore I acknowledge, that the greatest part of these men are ranked amongst the vulgar class of mankind, and quit this life without leaving posterity the least vestige of their existence. Their talents lie buried because fortune does not help to discover them. But the case is quite different with respect to such as are born painters or poets, and 'tis these only who fall under our present debate. With regard to these, I consider the arrangement of the different conditions which form society as a kind of sea : Your indifferent geniuses are overwhelmed by the waves ; but great ones find means to reach the shore.

Men are not, when born, what they are at thirty years of age. Before they become masons, plowmen, or shoemakers, they are a long while in a state of childhood. During their youth they are a considerable time fit for the apprenticeship of a profession, to which their genius has called them. The time which nature has allowed to children, for their apprenticeship in painting, lasts till their five and twentieth year. Now the genius which forms a poet or painter, prevents a person from his infancy, from falling into a servile submission

to

to mechanic employments, and sets him upon seeking out ways and means of instruction. Supposing his parents to be in so distressed a condition as to be incapable of giving him a suitable education, upon his shewing a much nobler inclination than his equals, somebody else will take care of him; the child himself will go in pursuit thereof with so much ardor, that chance at last will throw it in his way. When I say chance, I mean every occasion particularly considered; for these occasions occur so frequently, that the chance which makes the boy here mentioned embrace them, must certainly come sooner or later. Children born with a superior genius, and men who make it their business to instruct such children, must certainly meet some time or other.

'Tis no difficult matter to comprehend, how children of bright capacities, who are born in towns, fall into the hands of people capable of instructing them. With regard to the country, in the best part of Europe, it is strewed with convents, whereof the religious never fail to take notice of a young peasant, who shews a curiosity and aptness superior to his equals. He is soon taken in to serve Mass, where he has an opportunity of making his first studies. Then he is sure of his point; for the wit and capacity he has an opportunity of shewing, engage other people to assist him; nay he goes half way himself to meet the succours that are coming to him. Monsieur Baillet, to whom we are indebted for a great number of books, stocked with very singular erudition, was caught in this net.

Besides, the genius which determines a child to learning, or painting, inspires him with a great aversion

aversion to those mechanic employments, to which he sees his equals applied. He conceives a hatred to low trades, by which his parents or friends would debase the elevation of his mind. This forcible constraint during his infancy, grows insupportable, in proportion as he advances in years, and becomes sensible of his capacity and misery. His instinct, and what little he hears of the world, furnishes him with some confused ideas of his vocation, enough to convince him he is not in his right place. At length he steals away from his father's house, as Sixtus Quintus and many others have done, and passes to some neighbouring town. If his genius inclines him to poetry, and consequently to a love for polite learning, his bright capacity will render him worthy of the attention of some good-natured person or other. He will fall into the hands of some body that will destine him for the church; for all Christian societies abound with charitable persons who think it their duty to procure a proper education for poor scholars who shew any glimpse of genius; and this in order to render them one day an ornament to their community, or church. These children, when they grow up do not always think themselves obliged to follow the pious views of their benefactors. If their genius leads them to poetry, they resign themselves to it, and embrace a profession for which they were not designed, but fitted by their education. How can we imagine, that good seeds will lye dead on the ground, when people are so ready to pick up those, that give the least appearance of hopes?

Again.

Again. Were we even to grant that a malignity of conjunctures had enslaved a man of genius to an abject condition, before he had learnt to read, (which is to suppose the most ill-natured treatment of fortune) yet his genius will some way or another make its appearance. He will learn to read when he is twenty years old, to enjoy independent of any body that sensible pleasure, which verses afford to a man who is born a poet. His next stage will be to make verses himself. Have we not seen two poets rise from the shops of none of the most noble trades; the famous joiner of Nevers, and the shoemaker, *repairer of Apollo's buskins?* Has not Aubry, a master paver at Paris, exhibited within these sixty years tragedies of his own making? We have even seen a coachman, who knew not a letter, make verses, which tho' very bad ones indeed, are sufficient nevertheless to prove, that the least spark of the very grossest poetic fire cannot be so smothered, but it will throw out some glimmering light. In fine, 'tis not a man's acquired learning that renders him a poet; 'tis his poetic genius that is the cause of his learning, by forcing him to look out for means of attaining to a proper knowledge for perfecting his talent.

A child born with a picturesque genius, begins, when he is ten years old, to sketch with a coal the saints he sees painted in churches: Can twenty years elapse before he finds an opportunity of cultivating his talent? Will not his capacity make an impression on somebody, who will carry him to a neighbouring town, where under the direction of a hounding master he will render himself deserving of the

attention

attention of an abler instructor, whom he will soon go in search of from one country to another? But let us suppose the boy stays in his hamlet; he will cultivate there his natural genius, till his pictures will surprize some body travelling that way. This was the fate of Correggio, who had raised himself to an eminent degree in painting, before the world knew, that there was in the village of Correggio a very promising young man, who was beginning to shew a new kind of talent in his art. If this be an accident that seldom happens, 'tis because 'tis rare to find such great geniuses as Correggio, and still more rare that they are not in their proper stations when twenty years old. Those who remain buried all their lives, are, as I have already observed, only weak capacities, men who would never have thought of painting or writing, had they not been desired to work; men who would never have gone themselves in search of the art; but must have had the way pointed out. The loss of these is not great, as they were never designed by nature for illustrious artists.

The history therefore of painters and poets and of other men of letters, abounds with facts which sufficiently evince, that children born with a genius will surmount the greatest obstructions their birth can throw in their way to learning. In a subject of this nature facts are much stronger than any reasonings whatsoever. Let those, who are unwilling to give themselves the trouble of reading this history, reflect a little on the vivacity and docility of youth, and on the innumerable ways, whereof we have only pointed out a part, which can each in particular conduct a child to some situation, in which he may cultivate

cultivate his natural talents. They will be convinced of the impossibility there is, that out of a hundred geniuses even one only should remain for ever buried, unless he happens by a very odd caprice of fortune to be born among the Calmuc Tartars, or by some unaccountable accident to be transported in his infancy into Lapland.

C H A P. V.

Of the studies and progress of painters and poets.

GENIUS is therefore a plant which shoots up, as it were, of itself ; but the quality and quantity of its fruit depend in a great measure on the culture it receives. The very brightest capacity cannot be perfected but by the assistance of a long course of study.

*Natura fieret laudabile carmen an arte,
Quæsum est, ego nec studium sine divite vena,
Nec rude quid profit video ingenium alterius sic.
Altera poscit opem res & conjurat amicè.*

HOR. de arte.

*Now some dispute to which the greatest part,
A poem owes, to nature, or to art ;
But faith, to speak my thoughts, I hardly know,
What witless art, or artless wit can do :
Each by itself is vain I'm sure, but join'd
Their force is strong, each proves the other's friend.*

CREECH.

Quintilian, another great judge of works of wit and learning, will not even allow us to dispute, whether

'tis

'tis genius, or study which forms the excellent orator. He determines, that there can be no such thing as a great orator, without the concurrence of both.

But a man born with a genius, is soon capable of studying by himself, and 'tis the study which he makes by his own choice, and determines by his taste, that contributes most to accomplish him. This study consists in a continual attention to nature, and a serious reflection on the works of eminent masters, attended with observations on what is proper to be imitated, and what we should endeavour to surpass. These observations lead us to the knowledge of many things, which our genius would never have suggested to us of itself, or which it would not have hit upon 'till very late. One becomes master in a day's time of the manner and knack of execution, which cost the inventer whole years of research and labor. Even if our genius had vigor enough to carry us so far thro' an unbeatent road, we could not however arrive there by the sole assistance of our own strength, unless we were determined to go thro' a long and unwearied fatigue, similar to that of the first inventors.

Michael Angelo practised in all probability a long time, before he could draw the Eternal Father with that character of Divine Majesty, in which he has represented him. Perhaps Raphael, born with a genius not quite so bold as the Florentine, would never have reached by the strength of his own wings

^a *Scio quæri natura ne plus conferat ad eloquentiam quam doctrina. Quod ad propositum nostri quidem operis non pertinet. Nec enim consummatus artifex nisi ex utraque fieri potest.* QUINT Inst. lib. II.

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the sublimity of this idea. At least he would not have attained it, but after an infinite number of unfruitful attempts, and at the expence of several great and repeated efforts. But Raphael happens to have a glance of the Eternal Father drawn by Michael Angelo: struck with the nobleness of the idea of this great genius, whom we may call a Corneille in painting, he lays hold thereof, and becomes capable in one day of throwing into the figures he draws in resemblance of the Eternal Father, the characters of grandeur, majesty, and divinity, which he had just before admired in the performance of his competitor. Let us relate the story at length, as it is a better proof of what I advance, than a multiplicity of arguments.

Raphael was employed in painting the arched roof of the gallery which divides the apartments of the second floor of the Vatican; which gallery is commonly called the lodges. The arched roof is not one continued vault, but is divided into as many square arches, as there are windows in the gallery, and these arches have each their particular center. Thus every arch has four facings, and Raphael was painting at that time, a story of the Old Testament on each of the facings of the first arch. He had already finished three days of the works of the creation, on three of those facings, when the adventure, I am going to mention, happened. The figure which represents God the Father in those three pictures is really noble and venerable; but there is too great a softness in it, without a sufficient mixture of majesty. 'Tis only a human head, Raphael having drawn it in the

taste of those heads which painters make for Christ ; and if there be any difference, 'tis only that which, pursuant to the laws of art, ought to be between two heads, whereof one is destined for representing the Father, and the other the Son. Just as Raphael commenced the frescos of the vault of the lodges, Michael Angelo was employed in painting the vault of one of the Vatican chapels, built by Pope Sixtus IV. Tho' Michael Angelo, jealous of his ideas, had ordered no body to be suffered to come into the chapel, yet Raphael found means to get admittance. Struck with the Divine Majesty and the noble air of grandeur which Michael Angelo infused into the figure of the head of the Eternal Father, which is still seen in sundry parts of Sixtus's chapel, performing the great work of the creation, he condemned his own taste in this point, and preferred that of his rival. Raphael has represented the Eternal Father in the last picture of the first lodge, with a more than human majesty. He does not inspire us merely with veneration, he strikes us even with an awful terror. 'Tis true, Bellori^a disputes Michael Angelo's having had the honor of *improving by* his works, the *taste and manner* of Raphael. But the reasons alledged by this author do not appear to me solid enough to explode the common opinion founded on the tradition of Rome, and on other facts besides those which he denies.

Raphael was but an indifferent colorist, when he first saw one of Giorgione's pieces. He instantly perceived, that his art might draw from colors, far diffe-

^a *Description of the pictures drawn by Raphael of Urbino in the chambers of the Vatican.* p. 86.

rent beauties from those, he had hitherto extracted. This convinced him that he had not a competent knowledge of the art of coloring. He attempted therefore to follow Giorgione's example, and guessing by mere force of genius, at that painter's manner of drawing, he fell very little short of his model. His essay was ^a a representation of the miracle which happened at Bolsena, where the priest who was celebrating mass before the pope, and doubted of the truth of transubstantiation, saw the consecrated host become bloody in his hands. The picture here mentioned is commonly called the mass of Pope Julius, and is painted in fresco on the top and sides of the window, in the second division of the signature apartment in the Vatican. 'Tis sufficient to let the reader know, that this piece was drawn by Raphael in the prime of his practice, to convince him that the poetry must be absolutely marvelous. The priest who had doubted of the real presence, and had seen the consecrated host grow bloody in his hands during the elevation, seems penetrated with respect and terror. The painter has exhibited each of the assistants in his proper character; but it affords a particular pleasure to behold the astonishment of the pope's Swiss, who stare at the miracle from the bottom of the picture. Thus it is that this eminent artist has drawn a poetic beauty from the necessity of observing the *Costume*, by giving the pope his ordinary retinue. By a poetic liberty, Raphael pitches upon the head of Julius II. to represent the pope, in whose presence this miracle happened. Julius looks attentively at the mi-

^a BELLORI, *ibid.*

racle,

racle; but does not seem to be greatly moved. The painter supposes that the pope was too well convinced of the real presence, to be surprized with the most miraculous events that might happen to a consecrated host. 'Tis impossible to characterise the visible head of the church, introduced into such an event, by a nobler and more suitable expression. This expression shews us also the strokes of Julius II's particular character. We may easily distinguish by his portrait the obstinate besieger of Mirandola. But the coloring of this piece, which was the first cause of my mentioning it, is much superior to that of any of the other pictures of Raphael. There is no carnation drawn by Titian, that represents more naturally the softness, which a body ought to have, that is composed of fluids and solids. The drapery seems to be made of the finest silk and woollen stuffs just come from the hands of the taylor. Had Raphael drawn his other pieces with as true and rich a coloring as this, he would have been ranked among the most eminent colorists.

The same thing happens to young people that are born poets; the beauties which lye open in works composed before their time, make a lively impression upon them. They easily catch the manner of turning verses and the mechanic part of preceding authors. I should be glad to be informed by some authentic relation, how much Virgil's imagination was heated and enriched upon his first reading of Homer's Iliad.

The works of great masters have another manner of engaging young people of genius; which is by flattering their self-love. A young man of abilities discovers in those works several beauties and graces, of which he had already a confused idea,

set off with all the perfection they can possibly admit. He fancies he traces his own ideas in the beauties of a master-piece consecrated by the admiration of the public. The same adventure happens to him, as that which befel Corregio, while he was yet a plain burgher of the little town of Corregio, when he first saw one of Raphael's pictures. I said a plain burgher, tho' a vulgar error debases Corregio to the condition of a peasant. Monsieur Crozat has extracted from the public registers of the town of Corregio several proofs, which sufficiently demonstrate that Vafari was mistaken in the idea he gives us of Corregio's fortune, and especially in the recital he makes of the circumstances of his death.

Corregio, who had not as yet raised himself by his profession, tho' already a great painter, was so full of what he had heard concerning Raphael, whom princes contended to heap with presents and honors, that he fancied, an artist who made so great a figure in the world, must have had a much superior degree of merit to his, which had not as yet drawn him out of his mediocrity of fortune. Like a man unpractised in the world, he judged of the superiority of Raphael's merit by the difference of his circumstances. But as soon as he got sight of a piece done by that eminent master, and after examining it with attention, he had considered how he should have treated the same subject himself, he cried out, *I am a painter as well as he.* The same thing perhaps happened to Racine, the first time he read the Cid.

Nothing, on the contrary, is a greater indication of a man's want of genius than to see him examine coldly

coldly the performances of those, who have excelled in the art he pretends to profess. A man of genius cannot so much as mention the faults committed by great masters, without previously commending the beauties of their productions. He speaks of them only as a father would mention the defects of his son. Cæsar, born with a military genius, was moved, even to shed tears, at the sight of the statue of Alexander. The first idea which occurred to him when he beheld the effigy of that Greek hero, whose glory had been carried by the wings of fame to the most distant corners of the earth, was not of the faults which Alexander had committed in his expeditions. Cæsar did not compare them with his great exploits; no, he was struck with admiration.

I do not mean by this, that we must conceive immediately a bad opinion of a young artist for criticising some defects in the works of great masters: for defects they really had, as they were men. A genius, instead of hindering them from seeing those faults, will lay them open. What I look upon as a bad presage, is to see a young man very little moved with the excellency of the productions of great masters: that he is not transported into a kind of enthusiasm when he sees them: that he wants to calculate the beauties and defects he finds, in order to know whether he is to set a value upon them, and does not chuse to form a judgment on their merit, 'till after he has balanced his account. Had he that vivacity and delicacy of sentiment, which are the inseparable companions of genius, he would be so struck with the beauties of celebrated pieces, that he would fling away his scales and compasses to judge of them, as other people

have always done, that is, by the impression made by those works. A balance is very unfit for deciding the value of pearls and diamonds. A rough pearl of a bad water, let it be ever so heavy, can never be of an equal value with the famous *peregrine*, that pearl for which a merchant ventured to give a hundred thousand crowns, reflecting, says he to Philip IV. that there was a king of Spain in the world. An infinity of ordinary beauties thrown together, have not (to make use of this expression) so much weight, as one of those strokes, which the moderns, even those who deal in eclogues, must commend in Virgil's *Bucolics*.

Genius is soon distinguished in the works of young people; they give a proof of their being endowed with it, even before they are acquainted with the practice of their art. We find in their pieces some ideas and expressions, which have not occurred before, but are what we may call new thoughts. We observe amidst a great number of defects, a spirit that aims at very eminent beauties, and in order to attain his end, performs things which his master is incapable of teaching him. If these young fellows are really poets, they invent new characters, they say something that one has not read before, and their verses are full of turns and expressions, which do not occur elsewhere. For instance, your versifiers of no genius that undertake to write operas, can give us nothing but those thread-bare expressions, which Lulli (to make use of Boileau's words) *used to beat again with the sounds of his music*. As Quinault was the author and inventor of the proper style of operas, this style is an argument that Quinault had a particular genius, which those who

who can only trouble us with a repetition of what he said before them, must certainly want. On the contrary a poet, whose genius renders him capable to give a being to new ideas, is able at the same time to produce new figures, and to create knew turns to express them. We are very seldom obliged to borrow words to express our thoughts. 'Tis even rare that we are at any great trouble to find them; since thought and expression rise generally at the same time.

A young painter of genius begins to differ soon from his master, in things wherein his master disagrees with nature. This he sees with his eyes almost half shut, and frequently better than he that pretends to instruct him. Raphael was only twenty years old, and yet an eleve of Pietro Perugino, when he was employed at Sienna. Yet he distinguished himself so well, that he was intrusted with the composition of several pictures. One sees here that Raphael had already strove to vary the airs of the head; that he endeavoured to give life to his figures; that he designed the naked part under his draperies; in fine, that he did several things, which probably he never learnt of his master. Nay, his master himself became his disciple, for 'tis visible by the pieces drawn by Perugino in Sixtus's chapel in the Vatican, that he learnt of Raphael.

Another mark of genius in young people, is to make a very slow progress in those arts and practices, which form the general occupation of the common run of mankind during their youth, at the very time that they advance with gigantic strides in the profession for which nature has intirely designed them. Formed only for this

profession,

profession, their capacity seems very mean, when they attempt to apply themselves to other studies. If they learn them, 'tis with difficulty, and they execute them with a very bad grace. Wherefore a young painter, whose mind is intirely taken up with ideas relating to his profession; who is not so expeditiously fitted, as other young fellows, his equals, for the conversation and practice of the world; who appears whimsical in his vivacity; and whom an absence of mind proceeding from a continual attention to his ideas renders awkward in his manners and carriage; such a young painter, I say, generally turns out an excellent artist. His very failings are a proof of the activity of his genius. The world to him is only an assemblage of objects proper to be imitated with colors. To him the most heroic action in the life of Charles V. is this great emperor's stooping to pick up Titian's pencil. Do not strive to undeceive a young artist thus prejudiced with the notion of the regard due to his art; let him fancy at least, during the first years of his practice, that men illustrious in the arts and sciences hold the same rank now in the world, as they formerly held in Greece. Do not, I say, endeavour to undeceive him, experience will too soon perhaps set him right.

C H A P. VI.

Of artists without genius.

WE have already observed, that there is no man, generally speaking, but what brings some talent with him into the world, proper for the necessities

necessities or conveniences of society ; but these talents are all very different. Some are born with a talent suited for a particular profession ; and others for various professions. The latter are capable of succeeding in many, but their success cannot be very considerable. Nature places them in the world to supply the scarcity of men of genius, who are destined to perform wonders in one sphere, out of which they have no activity.

In fact, a man fit to succeed in several professions, is very seldom likely to be eminent in any one of them. 'Tis thus a soil proper for producing several sorts of plants, cannot give such a perfection to any particular plant, as it would have attained to in a soil peculiarly fit for it, tho' improper for any other species. A land equally fit for bearing grapes as well as corn, will produce neither of them in any eminent degree of perfection. The same qualities which render a ground particularly adapted for one sort of plant, disqualify it for another.

When one of those indeterminate spirits, who are fit for every thing, only because they are proper for nothing, happens by some conjecture to find the way to Parnassus, he learns the rules of poetry well enough to avoid committing gross mistakes. He is generally attached to some author, whom he chuses for his model. He feeds his mind with the thoughts of his original, and loads his memory with his expressions. As the persons here mentioned, who are destined to be the nursery of middling artists, have not a genius themselves, our copier, by confining himself to such models, is deprived of course of a proper subject of imitation in nature. These subjects he can discern

discern only in such copies of nature as are made by men of genius. If this imitating artist happens to be a man of sense, tho' of a poor genius, he gets nevertheless a comfortable subsistence from the plunder he makes of another man's property. His versification is so correct, and his rhyme especially is so rich, that he acquires by his new performances a kind of credit in the world. If he does not pass for a man of genius, he is esteemed at least as a person of some parts. 'Tis impossible (people will say) to write such verses without being a poet. Let him only take care not to expose himself to the public assembled ; that is, let him avoid writing for the stage. The most elegant verses, that are barren of invention, or decked only with borrowed embellishments, ought never to be produced in public, but with the greatest circumspection. There are only some peculiar receptacles, where they should be nursed, in the beginning ; they ought not to see light at first but before particular friends ; and strangers should not hear them, till they have been first informed, that such and such gentlemen have commended them. The prevention caused by these applauses, imposes upon people for some time.

If our imitating artist be not a man of sense, he makes an unseasonable application of the strokes and expressions of his model, whereof we are injudiciously reminded by his verses : He behaves in the publication of his works, as in the composing of them : He affronts the public with greater intrepidity than Racine and Quinault were masters of, on the like occasions. Hissed at upon one stage ; he gets

gets himself houted at and damned on another : Exposed to more contempt in proportion as he is more known, his name is adopted by the public as a common appellation for a wretched poet ; happy even in this respect, if his shame and infamy do not survive him.

Men of a midling capacity for a great variety of things, meet with the same fate when they apply themselves to painting. A person of this stamp, who by some accident is become a painter, shews rather a servile than an exact imitation of his master's taste in the contours and coloring. He grows a correct, if not an elegant designer, and if we cannot commend the excellence of his coloring, we do not however observe any very gross mistakes contrary to truth, because there are rules to direct him : But as none but men of genius can learn by rules to succeed in the ordonnance and poetic composition, his pictures are extremely defective in these articles. His works are agreeable only by detached pieces, because having never formed one general idea of his plan, but having licked it out by piece-meal, the parts are unconnected.

Infelix operis summa quia ponere totum.

Nesciet. HOR. de arte.

But he's a sot, unhappy in his art, Because he cannot fashion every part,
And make the whole complete. CREECH.

In vain a person of this stamp serves his apprenticeship under the best of masters ; he can never make in such a school, the same progress as a man of genius can with the assistance of an in-

different

different instructor. A master, as Quintilian observes^a, is incapable of communicating to his disciple the talent and art of inventing, which are the chief accomplishments of orators and painters. A painter may therefore impart the secrets of his practice, tho' he cannot his talents for composition and expression. A disciple void of genius, is frequently incapable of attaining even to that perfection which his master is arrived to in the mechanic part of his art. A servile imitator will naturally fall short of his model, because he adds his own faults to those of the person he imitates. Besides, if the master be a man of genius, he will soon be tired of instructing such a disciple. He finds he is upon the rack, as Tully^b expresses it, when he sees his pupil so extreamly dull in what he himself comprehended so quickly when he was a scholar.

We meet with nothing new in the compositions of painters of no genius, nothing singular in their expressions. They are so very barren, that when they have copied after others for a considerable time, they fall at length to copying themselves; and as soon as we know what picture they have promised, we find it easy to guess at the greatest part of their figures. The habit of imitating others, leads us to imitate ourselves. The idea of what we have painted, occurs always easier to our minds than what has been done by others. 'Tis the first thing that presents itself to

^a *Eaque in oratore maxima sunt, imitabilia non sunt. Ingenium, inventio, vis, facilitas & quidquid arte non traditur.* QUINT.

^b *Quod enim ipse celeriter arripuit, id cum tarde percipi videt, discruciatur.* CIC. pro Roscio.

those who seek for their composition and figures in their memory rather than in their imagination. Some, like Bassano, have no scruple in making a downright repetition of their own works. Others, endeavouring to conceal the thefts they have made from their own productions, introduce their personages again upon the stage, under a disguise indeed, but such a disguise as may be easily discovered; by which means their theft becomes still more odious. The public considers a work in its possession as its real property, and thinks itself extremely ill used to be obliged to purchase a second time, what it already had bought at the price of its commendations.

As it is easier to follow a beaten track, than to open a new road, an artist without a genius attains quickly to that degree of perfection to which he is capable of rising: He soon arrives to his proper height, and then grows no taller. His first essays are frequently as perfect as the works he produces in his full maturity. We have seen painters without a genius, but grown famous for some time by the dexterity of putting themselves forward, who perform much worse when they come to the state of manhood, than during their youth. Their master-pieces are in those countries where they made their studies; and they seem to have lost one half of their merit by repassing the Alps. In effect these artists, when they come back to Paris, do not find so easy an opportunity there, as at Rome, of stealing pieces, and sometimes intire figures to inrich their compositions. Their pictures grow extremely poor, when they have no longer an opportunity to pick up from the performances

formances of eminent masters, the head, the foot, the attitude; and sometimes the ordonnance they wanted.

We may compare the magnificent parade of the ancient and modern master-pieces, which render Rome the most superb city in the world, to those shops where a great quantity of jewels are exposed to sale. Let those jewels be set forth in ever so great a profusion, the number you bring home, will be only in proportion to the money you took with you for the purchase. Thus there is no solid benefit reaped from the great master-pieces of Rome, but in proportion to the genius with which they are considered. Le Sueur, who never was at Rome, and had seen only from afar, that is, in copies, the riches of this great capital of the polite arts, reaped more benefit from thence than several painters who are apt to boast of having dwelt many years at the foot of the capitol. In like manner a young poet improves by reading Virgil and Horace in proportion only to his genius, by the light of which he studies the ancients.

Let those who are born with an indeterminate genius, such as have an aptness and capacity for every thing, apply themselves therefore to those arts and sciences, in which the most knowing are the most eminent. There are some professions, in which the imagination or art of inventing is as prejudicial, as it is necessary in poetry and painting.

C H A P. VII.

That Genius's are limited.

MEN born with a genius for a particular art or profession, are the only people capable of any eminent degree of success; but then 'tis observable, that these are the only professions and arts, in which they can possibly excel. They fall into a very low character, when they quit their own sphere; and lose their vigor and penetration of mind, as soon as they enter upon things for which nature has not formed them.

The men here mentioned, are not only debarred from excelling in more than one profession, but are likewise generally confined to one of those branches into which the profession is divided. 'Tis almost impossible, says Plato, that the same man should excel in works of a different nature. Tragedy and comedy are, of all poetic imitations, those which have the greatest resemblance; and yet the same poet has not an equal success in both. Actors who play in tragedies, are not the same as those who act in comedies^a. Those painters who have excelled in drawing the souls of men, and in a just expression of the passions, were but indifferent colorists. Others have

^a Οὐκέτι καὶ τερπὶ μιμήσεως ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος, ὅτι πολλὰ ὁ αὐτὸς μιμησθαι εὖ, ὁσπερ ἐν, ἐ δύνατος. Οὐ γὰρ ἐν. Σχολῆ ἀρα ἐπίπλευσις γέ τι ἄμα τῶν ἀξίων λόγος ἐπίπλευμάτων, καὶ πολλὰ μιμήσεται, καὶ ἔτας μιμησίκος· ἕπεις τῷ ἐδὲ τὰ δοκῆντα ἐγίνεται ἀλλήλων εἶναι δύο μιμήματα δύνανται οἱ αὐτοὶ ἄμα εὖ μιμησθαι, εἴον καρφώδιαν καὶ τραγῳδίαν ποιήσεις. PLATO de Repub. 1. 3.

made the blood circulate in the flesh of their figures ; but they have not been so well acquainted with the expression, as the midling artists of the Roman school. We have known several Dutch painters endowed with a genius for the mechanic part of their art, and especially for the marvelous talent of imitating the effects of the chiaro-scuro in a narrow space, a talent for which they have been indebted to a particular patience of mind, which enabled them to hang for a long time over the same work, without being seized with that vexation and fretting, which is apt to rise in men of a livelier disposition, when they see their efforts prove several times abortive. These flegmatic painters have investigated with a kind of obstinacy, and by an infinite number of attempts, the teints, the mezzo-tintos, and in short every thing necessary for the degradation of the colors of objects ; and by their perseverance they have learnt to paint even light itself. We are enchanted with the magic of their chiaro-scuro ; for the various shadows are not better laid out in nature, than in their pieces. But those very painters have been unsuccessful in other parts of their art, of no less consequence. Bare of all invention in their expressions, and incapable of raising themselves above such objects as were present to them, they have drawn nothing but low passions, and a mean ignoble nature. The scene of their pieces is a shop, a guard-house, or a country kitchen ; and their heroes are a parcel of sneaking fellows. The Dutch painters here mentioned, who have attempted historical pieces, have drawn works that are admirable for their chiaro-scuro, but in every other

other respect ridiculous. The dresses of their personages are extravagant, and their expressions low and comic. They draw Ulysses without art or cunning, Susanna without modesty, and Scipio without any stroke of grandeur or courage. Thus the pencil of these frigid artists deprives those illustrious heads of their known character. Our Dutchmen, (among whom 'tis plain I do not rank the painters of the school of Antwerp,) were perfectly sensible of the value of local colors, but they were incapable of drawing the same advantage from thence as the painters of the school of Venice. The talent of coloring, as practised by Titian, requires invention; and depends more on a fecundity of imagination in contriving proper expedients for the mixture of colors, than upon an obstinate perseverance in re-touching the same thing a hundred times.

We may rank Teniers in the number of the painters here mentioned; for tho' he was born in Brabant, yet his genius determined him to imitate the taste of the Dutch painters, rather than that of Rubens and Vandyke, his countrymen and cotemporaries. Never was there a painter, that had greater success than Teniers in low subjects, such was the excellency of his pencil. He understood the chiaroscuro perfectly well, and surpassed all his competitors in the knowledge of local colors. But when he attempted history-painting, his success was even inferior to that of indifferent painters. His *pasticci*, whereof he has drawn a vast number, are immediately known by the mean and stupid air of the heads of the principal personages. We commonly give the name of *pasticci* to pictures drawn by an

impostor, who imitates the hand and manner of composing and coloring of another painter, under whose name he has a mind to expose his work to the public.

There are to be seen at Brussels in the gallery of the Prince de la Tour some large historical pieces, designed for Cartoons to a suit of hangings, and representing the history of the Turriani of Lombardy, from whence the house of la Tour Taxis is descended. The first pictures are done by Teniers, who caused the rest to be finished by his son. Nothing can be more indifferent with respect to composition and expression.

M. de la Fontaine had certainly a natural genius for poetry; but his talent was for tales and fables, which he has treated with an agreeable erudition, of which this kind of writing did not seem susceptible. When La Fontaine attempted to write comedies, they never missed being received with the hisses and cat-calls of the pit; and the same fate, 'tis known, attended his operas. Each kind of poetry requires a particular ability, and nature cannot bestow an eminent talent upon a man, without refusing to favor him with other qualifications. Wherefore 'tis so far from being astonishing that La Fontaine composed bad comedies, that it would have been a subject of surprize, had he wrote good ones. If Poussin had colored as well as Bassano, he would have made as great a figure among painters, as Julius Cæsar among heroes. Had Cæsar been just, his clemency would have rendered him the most illustrious of all the Romans.

'Tis

'Tis therefore a matter of great importance to the noble artists here mentioned, to know what kind of poetry and painting their talents have designed them for, and to confine themselves to that for which nature has formed them. Art can only perfect the *aptitude* or talent which we have brought with us into the world, but cannot give us a talent which nature has refused us. It makes indeed a great addition to our abilities, but this is when we study a profession for which we have been destined by nature. *The principal part of art, says Quintilian^a, consists in attempting things that are becoming. But this is a point that can neither be learnt without art, nor be entirely acquired by precepts.* It often happens that a painter remains concealed among the crowd, who would have been ranked among the most eminent of his profession, had he not been bewitched by a blind ambition, attempting to excel in some kinds of painting for which he had no capacity; whereby he neglected the parts, for which he had a natural ability. The works he attempted, are, if you will, of a superior class: But would it not have been more honourable for him to have held the first place among land-skip painters, than the last among the painters of history? Is it not a greater credit to be mentioned as one of the principal portrait-painters of our time, than as a wretched ranger of lame and ignoble figures?

The passion of being esteemed an universal genius, debases a great number of artists. When the value of an artist is rated in general, we are apt to take as

^a *Caput est artis decere quod facias. Ita neque sine arte, neque totum arte tradi potest.* QUINT. Inst. 1. 11.

much notice of his indifferent, as of his valuable pieces : Wherefore he runs the risk of having a character or definition given of him as author of the former. What a number of eminent authors should we have had, if their writings had been less voluminous ! Had Martial left us only those hundred epigrams, which men of learning in all countries generally know by heart ; had his book contained no larger a collection than that of Catullus ; there would be no such great distinction made between him and that ingenious Roman knight. At least there would never have been a great wit ^{*} so incensed at seeing these two writers compared, as to commit every year with great ceremony a copy of Martial to the flames, in order to appease by this whimsical sacrifice the poetic manes of Catullus.

Let us return to the limits prescribed by nature to the most extensive genius, and conclude, that the least limited genius is that, whose bounds are not of so narrow a compass as those of others. *Optimus ille qui minimis urgetur.* Now there is nothing more proper for discovering the limits of an artist's genius, than his performances in some branch or kind, for which nature has not designed him.

Emulation and study can never enable a genius to leap beyond the bounds which nature hath prescribed to his activity. Labor indeed may perfect him, but I question whether it can give him a greater extent than he has received from nature. The extent which labor seems to communicate to genius's, is only apparent ; and art instructs them to conceal their limits, but it never extends them. The same

Naugerius a learned Italian in the 16th century.

thing

thing happens to men in all professions, as in that of gaming. A man who has attained in a particular kind of play to the utmost extent of his ability, advances no farther, and the lessons of the best masters, and even the continual practice of gaming for the space of several years, are incapable of giving him any greater improvement. Wherefore labor and experience will enable painters, as well as poets, to give a greater correctness, but not a greater sublimity, to their productions. They cannot make them bring forth works of a character superior to their natural capacity. A genius who has only received of nature the wings of a dove, will never learn to soar with the flight of an eagle. We seldom acquire, as Montagne observes, by studying other men's works, the talent they had for invention. *The imitation of speaking is soon acquired; that of judging and inventing is not so easily attained. Women's mantles and attire may be borrowed; but strength and nerves cannot.*

The lessons of an eminent musician unfold our organs, and learn us to sing methodically: And yet they make but a very small alteration in the sound and extent of our natural voice, notwithstanding they seem to give it a softness and some kind of extent.

Now that which constitutes the difference of our minds, as long as the soul continues united to the body, is a thing no less real than what discriminates our voices and faces. Philosophers of all sects agree, that the character of our minds proceeds from the conformation of those organs of the brain, which assist the soul to discharge its functions. Now it de-

^a Essays, book 2. chap. 5.

pends no more on us to change the conformation, or configuration of these organs than to alter that of the muscles and cartilages of our face and throat. If ever there happens any physical alteration in these organs, 'tis not produced by the mere effort of our will, but by some physical change supervening in our constitution; and they are altered in the same manner as the other parts of the body. Our minds do not therefore attain to a resemblance by looking at one another; unless it be as our voices and faces are capable of acquiring a likeness. Art does not augment the physical extent of our voice, or increase our genius, only inasmuch as the exercise, wherein consists the practice of the art, is capable of making a real change of some part of the construction of our organs. Now the change which exercise is capable of making is a very small matter. Art does no more remove the defects of organization which it learns to conceal, than it augments the natural extent of such physical talents as are improved by its lessons.

C H A P. VIII.

Of plagiaries: What it is they differ in from those, who improve their studies to the best advantage.

BUT cannot (some will say) an artist supply the want of elevation and the sterility of his genius, by transplanting into his works those beauties which are so much admired in the productions of eminent masters?

masters? Can't he soar by the counsels of his friends, to where the strength of his own genius would never have been able to carry him?

With respect to the first point, my answer is, that it was always allowable to receive the assistance of other people's wit, provided it be done without plagiarism.

That which constitutes a plagiarist, is the publishing another man's work for one's own. 'Tis giving for our own composition, intire verses which we have had neither trouble nor merit in transplanting from another man's performance. I say, when we have transplanted without trouble, for if we happen to adopt the verses of a poet, who has wrote in a different language from our own, we are not then guilty of plagiarism. The verse becomes in some measure ours, because the new expression, with which we have clad another person's thought, is our property. There is some merit in committing such a theft, as it cannot be executed well without trouble, and without being endowed at least with the talent of expression. There is as much industry requisite to succeed in this, as was necessary in Sparta to steal like a gentleman. To discover in our own language proper terms, and equivalent expressions to those which the ancient or modern author has made use of: To be able to give them a proper turn, in order to convey the energy of the thought, and present us with the same image as the original, is not the task and business of a scholar. These thoughts transplanted thus from one language into another, can succeed only in the hands of those, who have at least the talent of inventing terms. Wherefore when

when they succeed, one half of their beauty belongs to those who set them in a new light.

The reputation therefore of Virgil cannot be diminished, by shewing that he borrowed a vast number of things from Homer. Fulvius Ursinus put himself to a great deal of trouble to very little purpose, if he collected all the passages which the Latin poet imitated in the Greek, merely to asperse the character of the Latin writer. Virgil has acquired, as it were, a right to the property of all those ideas which he borrowed of Homer. They belong to him fairly in Latin, because of the elegant turn and conciseness with which he has rendered them in his own language, and the dexterity with which he sets those fragments in a regular building whereof he is the architect. Those who imagined they might lessen Boileau's reputation, by printing by way of comment, at the bottom of the text of his works, the verses of Horace and Juvenal which he inhaled in his, were very much mistaken. The verses of the ancients, which this poet has so artfully turned into French, and so completely rendered an homogeneous part of the work in which he ingrafts them, that the whole seems to be one connected thought of the same person, are as great an honour to Boileau, as those that flow quite new from his vein. The original turn he gives his translations, the boldness of his expressions, as free as if they had risen with his conception, display almost as much invention as the production of a new thought. This is what made La Bruyere say^a, that Boileau seemed to create other mens ideas.

^a Harangue to the Academy.

It even adds a peculiar grace to one's works, to embellish them with antique fragments. The verses of Horace and Virgil well translated, and seasonably applied in a French poem, have pretty near the same effect as the antique statues in the gallery of Versailles. The readers are pleased to see in a new dress, the thought with which they were formerly delighted in Latin. They are glad to have an opportunity of reciting the verses of an ancient poet, in order to compare them with those of a modern imitator, who strives to vie with his original. There is nothing so inconsiderable but self-love sets a value upon it when it flatters our vanity. Wherefore authors most celebrated for the fecundity of their genius, have not disdained to add this kind of grace or ornament to their works. Was it a sterility of imagination which obliged Corneille and La Fontaine to borrow so many things from the ancients? Moliere has frequently done the same, and tho' he was rich enough with his own fund, he translated nevertheless ten verses successively from Ovid, in the second act of the Misanthrope.

We may admit of the assistance of those poets, who have wrote in the modern tongues; as we may benefit by the help of the works of the Greeks and Romans; but when we make use of the productions of modern poets, we ought, methinks, to mention whom we are indebted to, especially if we borrow a considerable part. I do not approve, for instance, M. de la Fosse's borrowing the intrigue, characters, and principal incidents of the tragedy of Manlius^a, from Mr.

^a *Manlius* was acted in 1697.

Otway's English play, intitled, *Venice Preserved*^b, without mentioning the work which had been of such service to him. All that can be alledged in defence of M. de la Fosse, is, that he has only used reprisals in quality of a Frenchman; because Otway himself borrowed from the history of the conspiracy of Venice, by the abbot of St Real^c, the subject, the principal characters, and the most beautiful passages of his piece. If M. de la Fosse has taken from Otway some things which the English poet did not borrow of the abbot of St Real, as the episode of the marriage of Servilius, and the Catastrophe, 'tis by reason that he who retakes a ship which had been made a prize by the enemy, is supposed to have a right to the goods, which they have added to the freight of the vessel.

As all painters speak, as it were, the same language, they cannot borrow the famous strokes of another painter, if his works be still existing. Poussin might have adopted the notion of the Greek painter, who represented Agamemnon with his head veiled at the sacrifice of Iphigenia, in order to convey a stronger idea of the excess of grief which overwhelmed the father of the victim. He might have made use of this stroke for the same expression, by representing Agrippina hiding her face with her hands in the picture of the death of Germanicus. The Greek painter's piece was no longer existing, when the Frenchman drew his. But Poussin would have been charged with having stole this stroke, were it to be seen in one of Raphael's or Caraccio's pictures.

^a Acted in 1682.^b Printed in 1674.

As there is no merit in stealing a head from Raphael, or a figure from Dominichino; as the theft is not attended with any great labor, 'tis forbidden under pain of public contempt: But as both talent and labor are required to animate the marble of an antique figure, and to make of a statue a living figure, which shall concur to the same action with other personages, 'tis a commendable performance. A painter is therefore allowed to make use of an Apollo of Belveder, to represent Perseus, or some other hero of Perseus's age, provided he animates this statue, and is not satisfied with copying it correctly, in order to place it in the picture just as it is in the niche. Let painters therefore give life to those statues before they make them act. This is what Raphael has done, who seems, Prometheus like, to have stole fire from heaven to animate them. I refer those who desire further instructions on this subject, to a Latin writing of Rubens, concerning the imitation of antique statues. It were to be wished, that this great genius had always practised his own lessons.

Painters who make the same use of antiques as Raphael, Michael Angelo, and some others have done, may be compared to Virgil, Racine, or Boileau. These have made use of poems that were ancient with regard to the time in which they composed, in the same manner as the illustrious painters above-mentioned made use of antique statues. As for painters who have no poetic rapture, whose entire composition consists in laying, as it were, the pictures of great masters under contribution, demanding two heads of one, an arm of another, and from the richest of

all a group ; robbers, that frequent Parnassus only to plunder passengers ; I compare them to patchers of centons, the most contemptible of all versifiers. Let them take care they don't fall into the hands of the officer whom Boccalini placed on the double mount ; for he will be sure to stigmatize them.

There is a vast difference between carrying off from a gallery the painter's art, or between appropriating the manner of operating peculiar to the admired artist, and transferring into our Portofolio a part of his figures. A man of no genius is incapable of converting, like Raphael, the grand and singular things he remarks, into his own substance. Without laying hold of the general principles, he is satisfied with copying what he has before his eyes. He therefore takes a figure along with him, but he does not learn to treat in the same taste a figure of his own invention. A man of genius guesses at the artist's manner of performing. He sees him, as it were, at work, by looking at his performance ; and laying hold of his manner, 'tis in his imagination only he carries off the booty.

With regard to the counsels of people of understanding, 'tis true they may prevent painters and poets from committing errors ; but they cannot suggest the expressions and the poetic style, nor supply the defect of genius. They may straiten the tree, but they cannot render it fertile. These counsels are fit only for correcting mistakes, and principally for rectifying the plan of a work of some extent ; supposing the authors happen to shew a sketch of their plan, and those whom they consult, consider and

and examine it well, and have it, pursuant to Quintilian's² advice, as present in their minds as if they had made it themselves. 'Tis thus Boileau gave those counsels to Racine, which proved so frequently of use to him. What can a poet in reality expect from reading a work to a friend, to which he has already put the last hand, than to be set right concerning some word, or at furthest with respect to some sentiment? Let us even suppose, that after a single reading we may be able to give good advice to the artist with respect to the plan of his work; is it to be imagined he would be patient and docile enough to comply with us, and to mould anew a work which he had already finished, imagining he was to have no farther trouble about it?

The most sublime genius's are not born great artists, but only capable of becoming such. 'Tis by dint of labor they rise to their highest point of perfection.

*Doctrina sed vim promovet insitam,
Rectique cultus pectora roborant.* HOR. od. 4. l. 4.

*Yet the best. blood by learning is refin'd,
And virtue arms the solid mind.*

But the impatience of appearing in public spurs us on; and we attempt to write a poem, when we are scarce yet able to turn a verse. Instead of beginning to work for ourselves, we must labor, forsooth, for

*Diligenter legendum est, ac pene ad scribendi sollicitudinem.
Nec per partes modo scrutanda sunt omnia, sed perfectus liber utique
ex integro resumendus.* QUINT. de inst.

the public. Such is particularly the fate of young poets ; but as they do not know their own genius, and have not as yet formed a style suitable to their character, and proper for expressing the ideas of their imagination, they are consequently mistaken in chusing such subjects as are not agreeable to their talents, and in imitating in their first productions, the style, turn, and manner of thinking of other writers. For example, Racine^a wrote his first tragedy in the taste of Corneille, tho' he had not a talent of treating tragedy in the manner as Corneille has handled it. Racine would have never been able to support himself, had he, to make use of this expression, continued to walk in his predecessor's buskins. 'Tis therefore very natural for young poets, who instead of imitating that side of nature which their genius points out to them, strive to copy the part which others have imitated ; who use violence to their talent, and endeavour to force it to pursue the same track which others have beaten with success ; 'tis very natural, I say, for them to write very indifferent pieces in the beginning ; pieces that may be said to be unworthy of primogeniture with respect to their younger brothers.

'Tis in vain nevertheless to attempt to persuade young people, pressed by emulation, excited by the fire and activity of youth, and spurred on by the impatience of their genius to the pursuit of fame, to defer making their appearance in public, till they have discovered their kind of talent, and sufficiently improved it. It would be to no purpose to tell them, that it would be gaining a great point to surprize

^a *Les freres ennemis, or the brothers at variance.*

the public ; that they would be much more respected, were they never to appear as apprentices in their profession ; that unexpected master-pieces, against which envy has no time to form a party, make a much greater progress than works long expected, which find rival critics upon their guard, and the character of whose author may be defined from some indifferent poem or picture. Nothing is capable of restraining the impetuosity of a young man, seduced by the flattering incentive of vanity, whereof the excess only is to be censured in youth. Besides, as Cicero ^a observes, *Prudence does not fall to young people's share.*

These precipitate performances remain, but 'tis unjust they should injure the memory of illustrious artists. Is not a apprenticeship necessary in all professions ? Now a apprenticeship consists in committing faults, in order to become capable of avoiding them. Do we even so much as dream of reproaching a person that writes good Latin, with the barbarisms and solecisms with which his first exercises must have been undoubtedly stuffed. If painters and poets have the misfortune of serving their apprenticeship under the inspection of the public, we ought not however to lay those little mistakes to their charge, in giving a description of their character after they have attained to the rank of eminent artists.

But artists without a genius, who are as fit to be Poussin's as Titian's eleves, jog on all their life in the road in which hazard has first engaged them ; whereas men endowed with genius perceive, when they chance to be led astray, that they have got into a wrong road : Upon

^a *Prudentia non cadit in hanc etatem.* CIC. pro Cælio.

which they abandon it to take up with another, and quit that of their master to go in pursuit of a new one. By master I understand here performances as well as persons. Raphael, tho' dead above two hundred years ago, may still train up pupils. Our young artist therefore, who is blest with a genius, enters upon a practice of his own to imitate nature, and this practice he forms from maxims resulting from his own and other people's labor. Every day adds some new improvements to his former knowledge. Each elegy and picture he makes, contributes to render him a better painter or poet ; and he excels at length those who probably had the advantage of him in masters and models. There is nothing but what affords him an opportunity for some useful reflection ; and in the midst of an open field he makes as useful a study, as if he were in his cabinet. In fine, his merit, raised to its highest pitch of perfection, supports itself with credit, till his organs growing feeble thro' old age, his trembling hand is no longer able to accompany his yet vigorous imagination. Genius is the last thing that grows old in man. The most decrepit and broken with age become warm, and assume an air of youth, when they enter into a discourse of things relating to the profession, for which they received a genius from nature. Let yon withered old officer speak of war, he seems seized with inspiration, as if he were sitting upon a tripod ; he talks like a man of forty, and finds matter and expressions with the same readiness and ease, as that which a blood fermenting with spirits affords for conception and speech.

Several ocular witnesses have assured me, that Poussin was, to the very end of his life, a youthful painter with respect to his imagination. His merit survived the dexterity of his hand, and he still continued to invent, when he had no longer the talents requisite for the execution. In this respect, there is some kind of difference between poets and painters. The plan of a long poem, the disposition of which, to be good for any thing, should be formed in the head of the inventor, cannot be executed without the assistance of memory; insomuch that the plan must feel the effect of the infidelity of this faculty; a consequence that too commonly attends old age. The memory of old men is treacherous with regard to new things. Hence arose the defects which occur in the plan of the latter tragedies of the great Corneille. The adventures are not properly brought on, and the personages are frequently thrown into situations, in which they can have nothing that is good or natural to say: Yet we may distinguish now and then the elevation, and even the fecundity of Corneille's genius, by means of the poetic style.

C H A P. IX.

Of the obstacles which retard the progress of young artists.

ALL geniuses shew themselves some time or other, but they do not all attain to that degree of perfection which nature has rendered them

capable of acquiring. Some there are, whose progress is stopt in the very middle of their course. A young man cannot make all the advancement he is capable of in the art of painting, unless his hand be perfected at the same time with his imagination. 'Tis not sufficient for painters to conceive noble ideas, to imagine the most elegant compositions, and to discover the most pathetic expressions ; their hand must acquire likewise a docility of bending a hundred different ways, to become capable of drawing with exactness the lines prescribed by their imagination. " We shall be incapable of performing any thing worth notice, says Fresnoi in his art of painting, unless our hand be taught to spread on canvas the beauties which our mind produces."

*Sic nihil ars operâ manuum privata supremum
Exequitur, sed languet iners uti vincita lacertos,
Dispositumque typum non lingua pinxit Apelles.*

FRESNOI de arte graphica.

Genius hath its arms tied, as it were, in an artist whose hand is not docile and pliant. The same pretty near may be said of the eye as of the hand. The eye of a painter ought to be accustomed early, to judge by a sure and easy operation, what effect may arise from a certain mixture or opposition of colors ; what effect a figure of a particular height may have in a group ; and what may be the effect of a particular group, after the picture is colored. If the imagination hath not a hand and eye at its disposal capable of forwarding its views, its compleatest ideas will be able to produce only some coarse picture, which the very artist that has drawn it will despise ;

so inferior will he find the execution of his hand to the invention of his mind.

The study necessary, for perfecting the eye and hand, does not consist in giving some hours to an interrupted labor. It demands an intire attention and constant perseverance for the space of several years. Every one knows the maxim which forbids painters to let a day pass without drawing a stroke ; a maxim so very judicious, that it is commonly applied to all sorts of professions. *Nulla dies sine linea.*

The proper time of life for acquiring this perfection of eye and hand, is that in which our internal and external organs are compleatly formed ; that is, from fifteen to thirty. The organs contract with ease, during this period, all those habits, of which their first conformation renders them susceptible. But if those precious years are lost, if they slip away without being laid out to an advantage ; the docility of our organs leaves us, which all our repeated efforts will never be able to recal. Tho' our tongue is a much suppler organ than our hand, yet we always mispronounce a foreign language, which we have learnt after the age of thirty.

Unhappily for mankind, 'tis in those precious years we are most apt to be called away from serious applications. 'Tis then we begin to confide in our own knowledge, which can be no more than the very first dawn of prudence. 'Tis then we lose that docility for counsel, which serves children instead of a great many virtues ; and our resolution, as weak as our reason, is not sufficient proof against weariness and dislike. Horace defines a young man,

Monitoribus asper,
Utilium tardus provisor, prodigus æris,
Sublimis, cupidusque, & amata relinquere pernix.

HOR. de arte.

Rough to reproof, and easy bent to vice :

Inconstant, eager, haughty, fierce, and proud ;

A very slow provider for his good,

And prodigal of his coin and of his blood.

CREECH.

Besides, every thing affords us, in this stage of life, opportunities of indulging our pleasures. The various tastes of a young man are passions, and his passions are furies. The fire of their blood brings several of these upon them at a time ; and 'tis very extraordinary, if their infant reason can be mistress only for a few moments.

I must add here another reflection, which is, that the genius of poetry and painting cannot dwell in a man of a cold temperament, or of an indolent humor. That very constitution which makes him a poet or a painter, inclines him to the liveliest of passions. The history of such eminent artists as have not been shipwrecked upon the rocks here mentioned, abounds at least with the dangers they have been exposed to, and their narrow escapes : Some have been dashed to pieces, but there are none of them but what have at least run a-ground.

I cannot conceive the cause of the Bishop of Alba's surpassing himself in the description he gives us of the inquietudes and transports of a young poet tyrannized by a passion, which struggles with his

genius,

genius, and drags him against his will from the occupations for which nature has formed him.

*Sæpe etenim tectos immittis in ossibus ignes
Versat amor, mollisque est intus flamma medullas ;
Nec miserum patitur vatum meminisse, nec undæ
Castaliae, tantum suspirat vulnere cæco,
Ante oculos simulacra volant noctesque diesque
Nuncia virginæ vultus, quem perditus ardet.
Nec potis est aliò fixam traducere mentem
Saucius.*

VIDA art. poet. l. 1.

*Oft hidden fires on all his vitals prey,
Devour the youth, and melt his soul away
By slow degrees ; — blot out his golden dreams,
The tuneful poets, and Castalian streams ;
Struck with a secret wound, he weeps and sighs ;
In every thought the darling phantoms rise ;
The fancied charmer swims before his sight,
His theme all day, his vision all the night :
The wandering object takes up all his care,
Nor can he quit th' imaginary fair. PITT.*

The nature of the waters of Hippocrene does not render them proper, as yet, for extinguishing this sort of conflagration.

The passion of drinking is still more dangerous than the foregoing : It occasions a great loss of time, and disables a young artist from making a good use of what little leisure it leaves him. Excess of liquor is not one of those vices, which age is apt to correct in man : And yet it deprives the mind in a few years of its vigor, and the body of great part of its strength. A man too much addicted to liquor, is surly and heavy without his bottle, and what little

spirits he has, arise only from the digestion of a stomach, which must necessarily be spoiled before its time.

Horace, when he speaks seriously, says that a young man who has a mind to excel in any profession, ought to be very temperate.

Abstinuit venere & vino. — Hor. de arte.

Nor taste the joys of wine, nor sweets of love.

CREECH.

Petronius, the least austere of all writers, requires a young man, who intends to distinguish himself in his studies, to be very sober. *Frugalitatis lege palliat exalta.* Juvenal speaking of the poets of his time, who wrote large works, says, that they abstained from wine even on those days, which were set aside by custom for the pleasures of the table.

*fuit utile multis
Pallere & vinum toto nescire Decembri.*

Juv. sat. 7.

*Then, then, 'twas worth a writer's pains, to pine,
Look pale, and all December taste no wine.*

Mr. CHARLES DRYDEN.

I shall not be reproached with having summoned the young people whom I intend here to arraign, before too severe a tribunal.

In fine, as the hurry and precipitation of a young painter is not always attended with success, he may now and then chance to take a dislike to a laborious employment, the success of which does not answer his expectations. The natural impatience of young people is the cause of their wanting to reap immediately

diate after they have sown. The allurement of an exercise to which our genius invites us, helps us very much to surmount our dislikes, and withstand our pleasures : but 'tis always better, when the desire of making our fortune comes in to assist the impulse of our genius. It were therefore to be wished, that a young man, whom his inclination determines to be a painter, should find himself in such a situation, as to consider his art as the means of his establishment, and to expect his figure and appearance in the world, in proportion to the improvement he makes in his profession. If a young man's fortune, instead of engaging him in a constant labor, concurs with the levity of his age to call him off from application ; what can we expect, but that he will let the time proper for the forming of his organs slide away insensibly without improving in his art ? A work frequently interrupted, and generally accompanied only with a superficial attention, is insufficient to perfect an artist. In fact, the success of our labor depends almost as much on the disposition we are in when we apply ourselves ; on what we were about before we began ; and on what we intended to do after we finish ; as on the duration of the very labor itself. When the force of genius brings a young painter back to a more serious study of his art, after the drunkenness of his youth is past ; his eyes and hands are no longer capable of improvement. If he has a mind to make good pictures, let him meddle only with that part which depends on the imagination, and let another hand be concerned in the execution.

Poets,

Poets, whose apprenticeship is not attended with so much difficulty as that of painters, can always render themselves capable of answering their vocation. The very first ardor with which their genius inspires them, is sufficient to learn the rules of poetry ; for 'tis not thro' ignorance that so many writers transgress them. The greatest part of those who violate these rules, know them very well ; but they find themselves destitute of abilities sufficient for reducing them to practice.

'Tis true a poet may take a dislike against entertaining us with long performances, because of the trouble attending the disposition of the plan. Perseverance is not a virtue that young people are fond of. If they apply themselves with ardor to the most laborious and most difficult exercises, 'tis upon condition of the shortness of their continuance. 'Tis therefore a great happiness for society, when young poets are obliged by their fortune to engage in a continual application.

By the necessity of making one's fortune I do not mean that of subsisting. The extremity of indigence, which obliges a person to write for bread, contributes only to lead a man of genius astray, who consulting not his talents, but his wants, pitches upon that kind of poetry which he finds most lucrative. Instead of composing ingenious allegories and excellent satyres, he spends his time in scribbling wretched pieces for the stage : for the stage in France is the Peru of poets.

A poetic enthusiasm is not a talent, which the fear of starving can inspire. If, as Persius says, who calls

calls the belly the father of industry, *ingenit largitor venter*, an empty belly sharpens people's wit, writers must certainly be excepted. Boileau observes after Juvenal, that

Horace a bû son saoul quand il voit les Menades.

When Horace Bacchus saw, his guts were full.

In fact, as the said Latin poet explains exceedingly well, to set foot on the mount Olympus, to penetrate into the projects of the Gods, to give feasts and entertainments to the Goddesses, is not the business of a poor shabby fellow, that does not know where to get a dinner. If Virgil, continues Juvenal, had not had the ease and conveniences of life, those hydras, which he represents as such hideous monsters, would have been no more than ordinary snakes. The fury, which fills the bosom of Turnus and Amata with rage, would have been, to speak after our way, like only to the tranquil Eumenis of the opera of Isis.

*Magnæ mentis opus, nec de lodiœ parandâ
Attonitæ, currus & equos faciesque Deorum
Aspicere, & qualis Rutulum confundat Erynnis.
Nam si Virgilio puer & tolerabile desit
Hospitium, caderent omnes a crinibus hydri.*

Juv. sat. 7.

*A wit should have no care, or this alone,
To make his rising numbers justly run.
Phœbus and Bacchus, those two jolly Gods,
Bear no starv'd poets to their blest abodes.
'Tis not for hungry wit, with wants controll'd,
The face of Jove in council to behold:*

Or

Or fierce Alecto, when her brand she toss'd
 Betwixt the Trojan and Rutilian host.
 If Virgil's suit Mæcenas had not sped,
 And sent Alexis to the poet's bed,
 The crested snakes had dropt upon the ground,
 And the loud trumpet languish'd in the sound.

MR. CHARLES DRYDEN.

Excess of want debases the mind, and a genius reduced thro' misery to write, loses one half of his vigor.

On the other hand, pleasures are as great an obstruction as want, to a poet's improvement. True it is that Lucan composed his Pharsalia, notwithstanding all the amusements and avocations, which are the common consequence of opulence. He received the compliments of his friends on the success of his poem, in his gardens enriched with statues of marble; but one single example proves nothing. Of all those poets who have ever attained to a high degree of reputation, Lucan is the only one, to the best of my remembrance, that always lived from his earliest years in plenty. I believe every one will join issue with me, when I assert, that Moliere would never have taken the pains necessary for rendering himself capable of composing *Les femmes savantes*, nor have been at the trouble of writing it after he had qualified himself for it, had he been in possession of an estate of a hundred thousand livres a year, at the age of twenty. Methinks I discover the proper situation of a young poet, in a witty expression of our king Charles IX. Poets and horses, (said that young prince in Latin, a language with which the custom of that time allowed even polite people to sprinkle their

their conversation) ought not to be fattened, but fed. *Equi & poetæ alendi sunt non saginandi.* The excessive passion which the great folks of that time had for their horses renders this comparison excusable, as the fashion of those days authorised it. The desire of improving his fortune raises the spirit of a poet who is in this situation, without any danger of want to debase his mind, and oblige him to run after a sordid stipend, as so many mercenary scribblers of dramatic poems, who seem to trouble their heads very little about the success of their pieces, but to fix their attention on the money they expect.

*Gestit enim nummum in loculos dimittere, post hoc
Securus, cadat an recto stet fabula talo.*

HOR. ep. i. l. 2.

*He writes for gold, and if his pocket's cramm'd,
He cares not, let the play be clapp'd or damn'd.*

CREECH.

As the mechanic part of our poetry is very difficult to those who write none but excellent verses, and easy to such as are contented with scribbling indifferent ones, hence we have a greater number of bad poets than painters. Every one that has the least glimmering of wit, or the smallest tincture of learning, attempts to write verses ; and unhappily for poets, every body becomes thus a judge, so as to pronounce sentence on all new poems, with the severity of a rival. Poets have complained a long time of the great number of competitors, who start up daily thro' the facility of the mechanic part of their art. " He that is not a pilot, says Horace, ought not to stand at the helm. Those who have not studied

" the

" the virtue of simples, should not pretend to make
 " up medicines. None but physicians ought to
 " prescribe bleeding to patients. Even the very
 " meanest trades are not practised 'till after an ap-
 " prenticeship ; but every body, capable or incapa-
 " ble, will dabble in verses."

*Navem agere ignarus navis timet ; Abrotonum ægro
 Non audet, nisi qui didicit, dare quod medicorum est,
 Promittunt medici ; tractant fabrilia fabri ;
 Scribimus indotti doctique poemata passim.*

HOR. ep. i. l. 2.

He that's no pilot, is afraid to sail,
 Urge him to guide a ship, you shan't prevail ; }
 And only doctors will pretend to heal.
 By smiths alone are locks and staples made,
 And none pretend but artists in the trade.
 But now for poetry we are all fit,
 And skilful, or unskilful, all must write.

CREECH.

The most stupid versifiers generally write with the greatest fluency and ease. Hence we are pestered with such a prodigious number of wretched performances, as are a scandal to Parnassus, and frequently hinder men of sense from assuming the glorious title of a poet.

This brings to my mind what Boileau said to Racine, concerning the facility of writing verses. Racine had just published his tragedy of Alexander, when he got acquainted with the author of the Art of Poetry. As he was making mention of his studies, he told him that he had a surprizing facility in composing verses. I will teach you, replied Boileau,

leau, to take pains with your versification, a thing I am sensible you will quickly learn. Racine has been heard to say, that Boileau was as good as his word.

But these troubles and contradictions are incapable of giving a young man a distaste of poetry, if he has had his vocation from Apollo himself, and is besides excited with the desire of acquiring a name and fortune in the world. He will attain sooner or later to his highest degree of poetic merit; but the use he will make of his abilities, will depend in a great measure on the times in which he lives. If his unlucky stars throw him into the world, when there is neither an Augustus nor a Mæcenas to protect him, his productions are not likely to be so frequent or so voluminous, as if he were born in a happy age with respect to the arts and sciences. Virgil was at an infinite deal of labor and pains to compose a poem of such an extent as his *Æneid*, notwithstanding the relish his genius gave him for this kind of study, and tho' he was encouraged by the attention which Augustus gave to his verses, and excited by a noble spirit of emulation. Had he lived at a time when there was neither an Augustus, nor a Mæcenas, nor a rival, he would still have been determined by the impulse of his genius, and love of glory, to improve his talent. Very likely he would have made himself capable of composing an *Æneid*; but it can hardly be supposed he would have had perseverance sufficient to terminate so large a work. Perhaps we should have had only some few eclogues of his, written in an easy fluent style, and a sketch of the *Æneid* containing only one or two books.

Your great artists are not those, whose productions are attended with least difficulty. Their inaction frequently proceeds from a dread they have of the pains which eminent works must cost them ; when people imagine 'tis laziness that keeps them unemployed. As sailors, who set foot on shore after having, to make use of the expression of an ancient writer, beheld death in every wave that drew near them, grow out of conceit for a while of exposing themselves to the perils of the sea ; so a poet, who is sensible of the pains a good tragedy has cost him, is not so very ready to attempt another. He must rest for a while ; and after being tired of his labor, he must grow weary of idleness, before he goes to work again.

A poet cannot, without a vast deal of labor and application, lay out the plan of a work of any extent. The pains of correcting and polishing one's own verses is likewise a very troublesome employment. 'Tis impossible but a person must soon grow tired of the serious attention to trifling niceties, which this kind of fatigue requires : And yet he must have the resolution to go through with it, be it ever so tedious. I appeal to the testimony of those poets, who have been deficient in this kind of labor. True it is, that poets feel a most sensible pleasure in the enthusiasm of composing. The soul wrapt up in the ideas, which rise in the heated imagination, is not sensible of the efforts she makes in their production ; 'tis only the lassitude and exhausting of spirits, which are the consequence of composing, that convinces them of their labor.

Neque

*Neque idem unquam
Æque est beatus ac poema cum scribit,
Tam gaudet in se.* CATULL. epigr. 20.

*He's never half so bleſt,
As when he writes and when the muse proves kind,
Such is the joy that fills his ravish'd mind.*

Those who write verses without a poetic genius, are pleased with their own performances, rather thro' a kind of delirium than any real enthusiasm. The greatest part of them, like Pygmalion, fall in love with their own shapeless or soft productions, and never trouble their heads about revising them ; for to fall in love implies being blind to the imperfections of what one loves. There never was a Greek tyrant, whose ears have been filled with so much flattery, as a poet pays to himself, when he censes those pretended deities created by his pen. 'Tis chiefly to bad poets we ought to apply the following passage of Cicero. *I don't know how it comes to pass, that rather in this than in other kinds every man thinks his own performance the best. I was never yet acquainted with a poet, who did not imagine himself the greatest man in his profession*^a. But a good poet is not so easily satisfied with what he has committed to writing. He is not even pleased with his verses, tho' they merit the approbation of others ; and the trouble he is at in polishing them to his mind, is attended frequently with impatience and disquiet.

^a *In hoc enim genere nescio quo pacto magis quam in aliis suum cuique pulcherrimum est. Adhuc neminem cognovi poetam qui sibi non optimus videretur.* Cic. Tusc. l. 5.

C H A P. X.

Of the time requisite for men of genius to attain to that degree of merit of which they are capable.

THERE is a great difference with respect to the space of time requisite for men of genius to arrive to their highest degree of merit. In the first place, genius's born for professions, which demand a great share of experience and maturity of spirit, are formed later than those, whom nature has designed for professions in which a person may succeed with little prudence and a strong imagination. A great minister, for instance, a great general, a great magistrate, does not arrive to the height of his perfection and knowledge, but in a more advanced stage of life than that in which painters and poets attain to their highest degree of excellency. The first cannot be formed without such a knowledge and skill of things, as is acquired only by experience; a knowledge which a great extent of mind, a subtle imagination, and even a constant application, are incapable of supplying. In fine, these professions require a ripe judgment, and especially a constancy unmixt with obstinacy. One may be born with a disposition to these qualities, but none are possessed of them at their birth; nor is it even possible to acquire them very early in life.

As our imagination gathers its full strength much sooner than our judgment; painters, poets, musicians, and those whose talent lies chiefly in invention, are not so long a forming as others. The age of thirty

is,

is, methinks, that in which painters and poets, generally speaking, reach the highest step of Parnassus. They may afterwards grow more correct and more prudent in their productions, but they do not become more fertile, more pathetic, nor more sublime.

As some genius's are slower than others (which is what I had to say in the second place) as their progress may be retarded by all the obstructions now mentioned, we have not pretended to determine the age of thirty as a critical year, before or after which there is nothing more to be expected. There may be five or six years difference in the age, in which two great painters or poets attain to their highest degree of perfection. One may arrive to it at eight and twenty, and the other at three and thirty. Racine was quite formed at eight and twenty: La Fontaine was much older when he wrote the first of his excellent pieces. Even the kind of poetry to which an artist applies himself, seems to retard this happy year. Moliere was forty years old, when he composed the first of his best comedies. But Moliere's being a great poet was not sufficient to enable him to write those pieces: it was necessary likewise to have acquired a knowledge of men and the world, a knowledge which is not so early attained, and without which the very best poets can write but indifferent comedies. A tragic poet ought to reach his highest degree of perfection much earlier than the comic writer; a genius, and a general knowledge of the human heart, such as we generally acquire in our first studies, being sufficient to write an excellent tragedy. But to write a comedy of an equal character, besides genius and study, 'tis necessary to have conversed a long time with the world.

In fact, to compose an excellent comedy, we must know in what consists the difference, which age, education, and profession produce betwixt people, whose natural character is the same. We must know what form is communicated by a particular character of mind to those sentiments which are common to all men. In short, we should have a thorough knowledge of mankind, and be acquainted with the language of all the passions, ages, and conditions. Ten years time is not too much for learning so great a variety of things.

'Tis very natural for great genius's to reach their highest point of perfection somewhat later than men of less elevation and extent. Great genius's have occasion for many more things than others ; they are like those trees which bear excellent fruit, and in spring have scarce blossomed, when the rest are already covered with leaves. Quintilian, who by profession was obliged to study the character of children, gives a most admirable description of what we commonly call, *slow and forward capacities*. If the body, says he, be not pretty plump in one's childhood, it will never be well shaped when one comes to full manhood. Those whose limbs are formed too soon become afterwards infirm and meagre : wherefore of all children those are the least promising, in my opinion, continues Quintilian, who by the generality of people are supposed to have more wit and capacity than others, because their judgment is sooner ripened. But this premature understanding proceeds from the imbecillity of their minds : they are in a good state of health, rather by reason they have no bad humors,

" humors, than because of their having a robust body."^a I have given here a few strokes only of this passage, which is so extremely beautiful, that it deserves to be read intire.

And yet this is the character which fills masters presently with great expectations. I speak of the common run, for if the master himself be a man of genius, he will be able to discern whether his pupil has a genius or no at eighteen. He will perceive it by the very manner of repeating his lessons, and by the objections he forms. In fine, he will distinguish it, by seeing him do what he did himself when he was a scholar. 'Tis thus Scipio Æmilianus discovered Marius's genius, when in answer to those that inquired of him, what person he looked upon as fit for commanding the armies of the republic, in case they should lose him ; he told them Marius : Marius notwithstanding was at that time a subaltern officer, and had performed as yet no exploit ; nor displayed any quality, that could have rendered him worthy in vulgar eyes of being Scipio's successor.

As soon as young people are arrived to that time, in which they must think and extract matters from their own fund, the difference between a man of genius and one who has none, becomes obvious to all the world. The former invents very fast, tho' he does not invent right ; the other does not invent

^a Erit ictus plenius interim corpora quod mox adulta ætas astrin-
gat. Hinc spes roboris, maciem namque & infirmitatem in posterum
minari solet protinus omnibus membris expressus infans . . . Illa
mihi in pueris natura minimum spei dabit, in qua ingenium judicio
presumitur . . . Macies illis pro sanitate & judicii loco infirmi-
tas est. QUINT. l. 2. c. 4.

at all. But 'tis easy, as Quintilian says^b, to find a remedy for luxuriancy; there's no labor can surmount sterility. Art which cannot make water rise where there is no source, can confine rivers which overflow, to their beds. The more the man of genius, and he that has none, advance towards the state of manhood, the more the difference between them grows sensible. The very same thing happens in this respect in poetry and painting, as we observe in all other conditions of life. The art of a governor and the lessons of a preceptor change a child into a youth; they infuse into him a greater share of knowledge, than he could be naturally supposed to have at his age. But this very child, when he arrives to that stage of life in which he must think, speak, and act of himself, is stript all of a sudden of his premature merit. His summer is far from answering the fine blossoms of his spring. The too solicitous education he has received becomes rather prejudicial to him, by reason of its being the occasion of his falling into the dangerous habit of letting other people think for him. His mind has contracted an internal laziness, which makes him wait for external impulses to resolve and to act. The mind contracts a habit of laziness with as much facility as the legs and feet. A man who never stirs without the assistance of some vehicle, becomes soon incapable of the same free use of his legs, as a person who has a constant practice of walking. As we must lend a hand to the former when he walks, so we must help the other to think, and even to will.

^a *Facile est remedium ubertatis; sterilia nullo labore viacuntur.*
QUINT. l. 2. c. 4.

In a child bred up with less care, his inward part labours of itself, and his mind grows active. He learns to reason and determine of himself, in the same manner as other things are learnt. At length he attains to argue and resolve rightly, by dint of reasoning and reflecting on the cause of his deception, when the events convince him of the error of his judgment.

The more an artist endowed with genius takes time to perfect himself, and the more he waits for experience to become moderate in his fallies, reserved in his inventions, and cautious in his productions, the further generally he carries his improvement. The noon of summer days is further from the sun's rising than that of winter. Cherries attain to their full maturity with the very first warmth; but grapes do not ripen but by the assistance of the summer heats, and the temperature of autumn. "Nature, says Quintilian^a, "has not thought proper to let any thing, that is "compleat in its kind, come quickly to perfection. "The more excellent and sublime the work is, the "greater difficulties must be surmounted to finish "it." This is the opinion of the author here mentioned, who certainly understood his subject perfectly well, tho' he never read Descartes. Wherefore, the more springs are requisite for the fibres of the brain, and the more numerous these fibres are; the more time they require to attain to all those qualities of which they are capable.

^a *Nihil enim rerum ipsa natura voluit magnum effici citò, præposuitque pulcherrimo cuique operi difficultatem, quæ nascendi quoque hanc fecerit legem, ut majora animalia diutius visceribus parentum continerentur.* QUINT. Inst. I. 10. c. 2.

Great masters therefore are generally longer in the course of their studies, than common artists. Their apprenticeship, if you will, lasts longer, by reason that they continue learning at an age, at which ordinary artists are already masters of what little they are capable of knowing. Let no body be frightened at the mention of apprenticeship, for there are several apprentices whose abilities surpass those of their masters, tho' their masters commit less faults. But the difference is, as Pliny expresses it^a, *that the latter, with all their correctness, have no strokes deserving of applause; the former, amidst their mistakes, shew something worthy of commendation.*

When Guido and Dominichino had finished each their picture in a small church built in the garden of the monastery of St Gregory on Mount Cælius, and dedicated to St Andrew, Annibal Caraccio their master was pressed to decide which of those two eleves deserved the prize. Guido's piece represents St Andrew kneeling before the cross; and that of Dominichino exhibits the flagellation of this apostle^b. These were grand subjects, on which our two antagonists had a very spacious field for displaying their talents; and they executed their pieces with so much the more care, as being painted in fresco; one opposite to the other, they were to continue eternal rivals, and to perpetuate, as it were, the competition of their masters. Guido, said Caraccio, has performed like a master, and Dominichino as an ap-

^a *Sed & bis non labentibus nulla laus, illis nonnulla laus etiam si labantur.* PLIN. epist.

^b Dominichino has repeated this very subject at St Andrea della walle,

prentice;

prentice ; but, continued he, the apprentice is superior to his master. We see indeed some faults in Dominichino's piece, which do not occur in Guido's ; but we meet there also with some touches, which are not to be seen in his rival's. There we perceive a spirit which aimed at beauties, to which Guido's soft and tranquil genius had no thoughts of aspiring.

The more we are capable of rising, the more steps we have to ascend before we can attain to the highest pitch of elevation. Horace must have been a full-aged man when he made himself known as a poet : and Virgil was near thirty when he wrote his first eclogue. Racine was pretty near the same age, according to Boileau, when he published his Andromache, which may be considered as the first tragedy of this great poet. Corneille was upwards of thirty when he composed his Cid. Moliere had not at that age wrote any of those comedies, to which he is indebted for the reputation he left behind him. Boileau was turned of thirty when he published his satyres, such as we have them at present. True it is, that the contrary may be inferred from the dates of his pieces inserted in a posthumous edition of his works ; but these dates, which are frequently contradicted, even by the piece of poetry to which they are prefixed, do not seem to me to be of any weight. Raphael was about thirty when he displayed the nobleness and sublimity of his genius in the Vatican. 'Tis there we may behold his chief performances, worthy of the great name he transmitted to succeeding ages.

C H A P. XI.

*Of works suitable to men of genius, and of
artists who counterfeit other people's manner.*

MEN of genius, that are jealous of their reputation, ought to publish none but large performances, since it is impossible for them to conceal their apprenticeship from the public. By this precaution they might avoid exposing themselves to disagreeable comparisons. When painters and poets of ever so eminent a genius happen to publish, either poems consisting of a small number of verses, or pictures containing a single figure without expression, and placed in a common attitude, their productions are exposed to very odious parallels. As a person may scribble four or five good verses without a genius, or draw a good picture of the Virgin Mary with a child in her lap, without being a great painter, the difference between the plain workman and the divine artist is not so obvious in such limited pieces, as in works of greater composition and susceptible of a larger number of beauties. In the latter this difference shews itself in its full extent.

There are some pictures of the Virgin Mary done by Carlo Maratti, which the favorers of this painter maintain to be equal in beauty to those of Raphael, for which we cannot charge them with any excessive exaggeration. And yet what immense difference is there in the composition of those two painters, and who is it that ever presumed to draw a parallel between them ! Tho' painters are as apt to be self-

self-conceited as poets, yet Carlo Maratti himself did not think himself worthy to mix his pencil with that of Raphael. A little after the jubilee year of 1700, there was a resolution taken to repair the ceiling of the gallery of that palace at Rome, which goes by the name of the Little Farnese. This house was built by Augustine Chigi, who lived under the pontificate of Leo X. The paintings which Chigi had caused to be drawn here by Raphael, have rendered the name of Chigi as famous in Europe, as the pontificate of Alexander VII.^a Carlo Maratti having been chosen as the principal painter at Rome, to take the above-mentioned ceiling in hand, on which Raphael had represented the history of Psyche, this able painter would not consent to make any addition to the old work, but only to touch it over again with the pastel ; because, said he, if there should happen to rise hereafter, a person worthier than I, of joining his pencil with that of Raphael, perhaps he will efface my work, in order to substitute his own.

Vander Meulen knew how to paint a horse as well as Le Brun, and Baptist could draw a basket of flowers better than Poussin. To come to poetry, Boileau has wrote some epigrams much inferior to those of two or three poets, who would not so much as presume to compare themselves to him. We cannot judge so well of the superiority of one race-horse over another, when they run too short a distance : The difference is easier to be distinguished, when they start for any considerable length. It would be unnecessary to explain here in what sense I understand a small

^a This pope was of the family of the Chigi.

work ; for a picture only three feet long, may be sometimes a large work ; and a poem of only three hundred verses may be a large poem.

I shall add here one reflection concerning those works, which do not require much invention ; 'tis that your forgers in painting counterfeit them with much greater ease than they can counterfeit those in which the imagination of the artist has full room to display itself. Your makers of *pasticci*, that is, those pictures which are drawn in imitation of the manner of a great artist, and are exposed in public under his name, tho' he never saw them ; those makers of *pasticci*, I say, are never able to forge the ordonnance, coloring, or the expression of eminent masters. We may imitate another man's hand, but we cannot, to express myself thus, imitate so well his mind ; we cannot learn to think like another so well, as we can learn to mimic his speech.

Were an indifferent painter to counterfeit a large composition of Dominichino's, or Rubens, he would be no more able to impose upon us, than one that would attempt to make a *pasticcio* under the name of Giorgione or Titian. We must have a genius almost equal to that of the painter we attempt to counterfeit, to be able to make our work pass for his. We cannot therefore counterfeit the genius of great men, but we may sometimes succeed so far as to imitate their hand, that is, their manner of laying on the colors, and drawing their strokes, the airs they used to give their heads, and the vicious parts of their practice. 'Tis much easier to imitate mens faults than their perfections. For instance, Guido is charged with having made his heads too broad. They frequently

quently want a roundness, by reason their parts are not distinct, and do not rise sufficiently one upon another. In order therefore to imitate him in this particular, 'tis sufficient to be negligent, and not to give one's self the trouble of practising what the rules prescribe with relation to the roundness of heads.

Jordano the Neapolitan, whom his countrymen call the *il fa presto*, or the *quick dispatcher*, was, next to Teniers, the greatest maker of *pasticci*, that ever laid snares for the curious. Flusht with the vanity of having counterfeited with success some of Guido's heads, he undertook some large compositions in the taste of that amiable artist, and in that of some other eleves of Caraccio. All those pictures, representing divers events of the history of Perseus, are to be seen at Genoa, in the palace of the marquis Grillo, who paid this forger much handsomer, than the great masters, whose ape he acted, had been paid in their time. Upon seeing those pictures, one cannot help being surprized, that a painter, who did not want talents, should have employed his labor and time so ill, and that a noble Genoese could have made so bad a use of his money.

The same remark holds good in poetry. A man of no genius, but who has read a great number of verses, may, by a proper arrangement of such things as he recollects, compose an epigram which will bear so great a resemblance to those of Martial, as to pass for one of that poet's. But a poet, who after diverting himself with writing a thirteenth book of the *Aeneid*, should be bold enough to attribute it to Virgil, would find no body to swallow the cheat.

Muretus

Muretus was able to make six verses of his own composing, pass for those of Trabea, a Latin comic poet, who lived in the sixth hundredth year after the foundation of Rome.

*Here, si querelis, ejulatu, fletibus
Medicina fieret miseriis mortalium,
Auro parandæ lacrimæ contra forent.*

*Nunc hæc ad minuenda mala non magis valent,
Quam næniæ preficæ ad excitandos mortuos,
Res turbidæ consilium, non fletum expetunt.*

Master, if human miseries could be remedied by complaints and weeping, tears would soon be purchased with gold. But these contribute no more to the lessening of our misfortunes, than the funeral songs of a hired mourner can avail towards raising the dead. Troubles in life do not call for tears, but counsel.

Joseph Scaliger had been so far deceived by those verses, as to quote them in his commentary on Varro², as a fragment of Trabea discovered in an ancient manuscript. If Muretus had attempted to forge a whole comedy in the style of Terence, he could not have imposed upon Scaliger. Men that have a regard for their reputation, ought therefore to endeavour to put it out of the power of future impostors, to impute supposititious works to their memory. 'Tis enough for them to answer for their own faults to posterity.

² Page 212. Edit. ann. 1573.

C H A P. XII.

Of illustrious ages, and of the share which moral causes have in the progress of arts.

ALL ages are not equally fertile in great artists. 'Tis a common observation that there are some ages in which the arts and sciences are in a drooping condition, as there are others in which they produce flowers and fruit in abundance. What comparison is there between the poetic writings of the Augustan age, and the productions of that art in the age of Gallienus ! Was painting the same art, in a manner, under Leo X. as in the two preceding centuries ? But the superior excellency of some ages, in comparison to others, is a thing too well known, to require any arguments to evince it. Our business here is to trace, if possible, those causes which render one particular age so vastly superior to others.

Before I enter upon my subject, I must beg leave of the reader to use the word *age* in a signification somewhat different from that in which it is rigorously understood. The word *age*, in the civil sense thereof, implies a duration of one hundred years ; but sometimes I shall make it import a duration of sixty or seventy only. I fancied I might use the word *age* in this signification with so much the more liberty, as the duration of an *age* is essentially arbitrary, and the agreement of people in giving a hundred years to each *age*, was only in order to facilitate the calculations and citations of chronology. There is no

physical

physical revolution in nature at the end of a hundred years, as there is at the expiration of one year, which is what we call the annual revolution of the sun. Besides, people are accustomed to make use of the word age, when they speak of those happy times in which the arts and sciences particularly flourished. One is used to say and hear on this occasion, the age of Augustus, of Alexander, and of Lewis XIV.

'Tis easy to perceive, that moral causes have a great share in the sensible difference there is in ages. I call here moral causes, those which operate in favor of arts, without imparting any real capacity or wit to the artists, and in short, without making any physical alteration in nature, but are only an inducement to perfect their genius, by rendering their labor easier to them, and by exciting them by emulation and rewards, to study and application. I give therefore the appellation of moral causes of the perfection of arts, to the happy situation in which painters and poets find their country at their setting out in their respective professions ; to the inclination of their sovereign and their fellow citizens for the polite arts ; in fine, to those excellent masters who flourish in their time, whose instructions abridge their studies, and secure their success. Is there any doubt but Raphael would have been a compleat painter four years sooner, had he been the eleve of another Raphael ? Who can pretend to say, that a French painter who had taken wing at the commencement of the thirty five years war which ravaged France till the treaty of Vervins^a, could have

^a In the year 1598.

the

the same opportunities of improvement, or meet with the same encouragement, as if he had begun to fly in the year sixteen hundred and sixty.

Is it possible for the countrymen of great artists to give such an attention to the polite arts, as may promote their success, unless they happen to live at a time when they are allowed to be more attentive to their pleasures than wants ? Now this general attention to pleasure, supposes a long train of years exempt from those inquietudes and fears which are the general consequence of war, at least such as may endanger the estates and fortunes of particulars, by aiming at the subversion of the constitution of which they are members. The delicate taste the Romans had for the polite arts was unknown to them, whilst they were engaged in their own country in wars, the events of which might have been fatal to their republic, because the enemy upon the gaining of a victory might come and incamp upon the banks of the Tiber. They did not begin to relish poetry and painting, till after they had transferred the seat of war into Greece, Africa, Asia, and Spain, when the battles fought by their generals did not decide the fate of their republic, but only its glory and extent of dominions. The people of Rome, as Horace observes,

Et post Punica bella quietus querere coepit.

Quid Sophocles, & Thespis, & Aeschylus utile fer-

morent. HOR. ep. l. 2. ep. i.

Till Carthage ruin'd, she grew soft in peace,

And then inquir'd what weighty Sophocles,

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*What Aeschylus, what Thespis taught the age,
What good, what profit did commend the stage.*

CREECH.

The recompences of a sovereign come next to the attention of our countrymen and cotemporaries. If he distributes his favors impartially, they are an encouragement to artists ; which they cease to be, as soon as they are misplaced. Nay, it would be much better, were a sovereign not to distribute any favors at all, than to do it without judgment. An able artist may find means to comfort himself under the contempt and neglect into which his art is fallen. A poet may even bear with the disrelish people chance to have for poetry ; but he is ready to burst with envy and spite, when he sees a prize given to works that are far inferior to his own performances. He grows desperate at the sight of an injustice which is a personal affront to him, and he renounces, as much as in him lies, the Muses for ever.

Men are not generally so self-conceited, as people imagine, but have at least a glimpse or imperfect knowledge of their intrinsic value, as well as of their estimation in the eyes of the world. Those who are neither sovereigns, nor ministers, nor too nearly related to one another, have frequent opportunities of knowing their real value, which they cannot doubt of for any considerable time, unless they be perfect fools. One cannot commend and hug one's self alone for any length of time ; and Cotin could not have been long ignorant that his verses were hissed at by the public. That vanity therefore and conceit which appears in middling poets, is frequently affected,

fected, insomuch that their inward opinion differs from their outward speeches in commendation of their works. There is no question but poets are frequently insincere in speaking of the merit of their verses. Is it not contrary to their inward conviction, that they commend as their very best performance that which the public esteems the worst? But this is because they want to give a reputation to a poem whose weakness stands in need of a support, by shewing an affected prejudice in favor of this piece; whilst they abandon those works to their own fate, which are able to support themselves with their own wings. Corneille was often heard to say, that *Attila* was his best piece; and Racine would fain make people believe, that he preferred *Berenice* to any of his profane tragedies.

Great masters ought therefore not only to meet with a recompence, but they should even be rewarded in a particular manner. Without this distinction, presents cease to be a recompence, and become a mere salary common to good and bad artists, by which no one thinks himself particularly honored. The Roman soldiers would have ceased to set a value upon the crown of oaken boughs, for which they used to expose themselves to the greatest dangers, had the favor of a general bestowed it a few times on those who never deserved it.

We find that moral causes were a great encouragement to the polite arts, in those ages in which painting and poetry flourished. History makes mention of four ages, whose productions have been admired by succeeding times. Those happy ages in which the arts attained to a perfection which they fell short

of at other times, are, that which commenced ten years before the reign of Philip father of Alexander the Great, that of Julius Cæsar and Augustus, that of Julius II. and Leo X. and finally, that of our king Lewis the fourteenth.

Greece was no longer afraid of being ravaged by Barbarians in the time of Philip king of Macedon. The wars which the Greeks waged amongst themselves, were not of such a destructive nature to society, as to drive particulars from their own house and home, or lead them slaves into an enemy's country; such as those, which the barbarous conquerors emerging from the northern snows, waged formerly against the Roman empire. The wars which were then carried on in Greece, resembled those which have been frequently waged on the frontiers of the Spanish Netherlands, that is, a kind of war in which the people, 'tis true, run a risk of being conquered, but not of being made slaves, or of losing their property, or of being exposed to such misfortunes as commonly happen in the wars between the Christians and Turks. The wars therefore of the Greeks amongst themselves, were what may be properly called regular wars, in which the laws of civility and humanity were frequently practised. It was forbidden by the law of nations at that time, to pull or beat down a trophy raised by the enemy to perpetuate his glory and the opposite party's infamy. Now all those laws of nations which discriminate the engagements of armies from the combats of wild beasts, were so religiously observed at that time, that the Rhodians chose rather to erect a building in order to inclose and conceal the trophy raised

raised there by Artemisia after the taking of their town, than to destroy it upon any account. Greece abounded at the same time with sanctuaries equally respected by the several contending parties. A perfect neutrality prevailed always in those asylums, and the weaker side was always secure from the attacks of the most inveterate enemy. One may easily form an idea of the little effusion of blood in those battles which were fought between the Greeks, by the surprize with which Livy says they were seized at the sight of the butcherly arms of the Romans, and of the great carnage and slaughter they made in the heat of battle. This surprize was like that of the Italians, when they first saw the manner in which the French waged war, during the expedition of our king Charles VIII. to the kingdom of Naples.

People of all ranks must have been vastly at their ease during the happy days of Greece. Society was then divided into masters and slaves, by which means the several exigencies of the community were much better answered, than by a low and ill-educated class of people, who work only thro' necessity, and find themselves destitute of several things requisite for carrying on their business to an advantage, when they are reduced to labor. The wasps and hornets were not so numerous with regard to the bees, as they are in our days. The Greeks, for instance, did not bring up a part of their inhabitants to be unfit for every thing except the art of war ; a kind of education which has been a long while one of the most dreadful scourges of Europe. The generality therefore of the nation made pleasure their principal occupation, in the same man-

ner as is practised by such of our own countrymen as are born to an estate of a hundred thousand livres a year ; and their climate gave them a greater sensibility of the pleasures of the mind, amongst which poetry and painting are the most bewitching allurements. Wherefore the greatest part of the Greeks were connoisseurs, at least by acquiring a comparative taste. Hence a workman became a celebrated artist in Greece as soon as his merit was eminent ; and nothing gave a man a greater dignity than the fame of being illustrious in the arts and sciences. This kind of merit changed a common fellow into a great personage, insomuch as to be thought upon a level with those that were intrusted with the highest and most important offices of the state.

The Greeks were so much prevented in favor of all those talents which conduce to the amusement of society, that their very kings did not think it a dishonor to chuse players for their ministers^a. *To appear upon the stage for the public amusement, says Cornelius Nepos, speaking of the Greeks, was never reckoned dishonorable among those nations, tho' with us 'tis esteemed an infamous, or at least a mean and indecent employment*^b.

The opportunities of receiving the applauses and favors of great assemblies, were also very frequent in Greece. As we have congresses in our

^a Livius histor. l. 24. QUINT. dial. de orat.

^b *In scenam vero prodire & populo esse spectaculo nemini in eisdem gentibus fuit turpitudini, que omnia apud nos partim infamia, partim humilia, partim ab honestate remota ponuntur.* COR. NEPOS in procemia.

times, where the deputies of princes and states meet in order to terminate wars, and regulate the fate of provinces and the limits of kingdoms ; in like manner there were assemblies formerly from time to time, where the most illustrious personages of Greece rendezvouzed, in order to decide the merit of the most eminent painter, the most moving poet, and the best wrestler. This was the real motive which induced such multitudes of people to flock to those public games that were celebrated in different cities. The public porticos where the poets went to recite their verses, or painters to expose their pictures, were places where the better sort of company used generally to meet. In fine, *the works of great masters*, as Pliny observes^a, *were not considered at the time here mentioned, as common moveables destined to embellish a private person's apartment*; no, they were looked upon as *the jewels of the state and as a public treasure, the enjoyment whereof was due to all the inhabitants*. The ardor which painters and poets had in those times to improve their talents, was not inferior to the eagerness which we observe in the people of our days to heap up money, and to attain to great employments in the state. Wherefore the Muses, as Horace observes, presented the Greeks particularly with wit and eloquence, to recompence them for their constant service and attendance, and for their disinterestedness in every thing, except the article of praise.

^a *Non enim parietes excolebant dominis tantum, nec domos uno in loco mansuras, quæ ex incendio rapi non possent. Omnis eorum ars urbibus excubabat, pictisque res communis terrarum erat.* PLIN. hist. l. 35.

*Graii ingenium, Graii dedit ore rotundo
Musa loqui, præter laudem nullius avaris.*

HOR. de arte.

*The Muses lov'd the Greeks, and blest with sense,
They freely gave them wit and eloquence.*

CREECH.

If we do but consider the situation of Rome, when Virgil, Pollio, Varius, Horace, Tibullus, and their cotemporaries were so great an honor to poetry, we shall find, that in their days Rome was the flourishing capital of the greatest and happiest empire that ever existed. This city enjoyed, after a long succession of troubles and civil wars, the sweets of a repose she had been long a stranger to, and this under the government of a prince who was a real lover of merit, being possessed of a great share of it himself. Besides, Augustus was obliged to make a good use of his new authority, in order to be more able to establish it; and consequently he could not confide it but to such ministers as were lovers of justice, and likely to make a moderate use of their power. Thus riches, honors, and distinctions were the sure encouragement and reward of merit. As a court was a new and odious thing at Rome, Augustus was determined, that his at least should be subject to no other reproach than that of being a court.

If we descend to the age of Leo X. in which the arts and sciences, that had been buried ten centuries, rose out of their tombs; we shall find, that under his pontificate Italy was in the greatest state of prosperity it had been in since

the

the time of the Cæsars. Those petty tyrants, who had *nestled* themselves with their officers and attendants in an infinite number of fortresses, and whose friendship and quarrels were both a terrible scourge to society, had been just exterminated by the prudence and courage of Pope Alexander VI. Seditions were now removed from the cities, the greatest part of which formed themselves at the close of the preceding century, into regular and settled governments. We may venture to assert, that the foreign wars which commenced about that time in Italy by the expedition of Charles VIII. to Naples, were not so grievous to society, as the perpetual dread of being carried off, upon going into the country, by the banditti of a villain, who was settled, and, pursuant to the phrase of those times, fortified in a strong hold ; or as the apprehension of seeing one's house set on fire in a popular tumult. The wars of those days resembled a storm of hail which came by puffs, and ravaged only a small part or corner of the country. The art of exhausting provinces for the subsisting of armies on the frontiers, that pernicious art which perpetuates the quarrels of sovereigns, and continues the calamities of war a long time after the conclusion of treaties, insomuch as to render it impossible for peace to flourish till several years after the war is finished ; that pernicious art, I say, had not been as yet invented. Two Popes had reigned successively, who were extremely desirous of leaving illustrious monuments of their pontificate, and found themselves obliged of course to excite and encourage all those artists and men of learning, who by immortalizing themselves

were

were capable of giving them immortality. Francis I. Charles V. and Henry VIII. grew jealous of their reputation, and rivalled them in their turns in the encouragement of arts and sciences. By this means learning and arts made a most surprizing progres; and painting particularly was carried, in a very short term of years to its utmost pitch of perfection; no wonder, when, to express myself in Pliny's words, *it was courted by kings and nations, ennobling those whom it deigned to hand down to posterity².*

The reign of our late king Lewis XIV was a most favourable time for the arts and sciences. As soon as that prince took the reins of government into his own hands, he made the most advantageous settlements for men of genius, that were ever established by any sovereign. The minister whom he employed for this particular purpose, was extremely capable of discharging his office. M. Colbert's protection was never purchased at the price of a servile and assiduous flattery, nor of a pretended or real subjection to his will and pleasure. He had no other inclination but that of having his prince served by men of the best capacities. Sole author of his master's decisions, and disposer of his favors, he went himself in search of those that were thus qualified, and offered them his protection and friendship, when they did not presume to demand it. Merit therefore at that time, thro' the magnificence of the prince, and the wise conduct of the minister, became a kind of estate or patrimony.

² Cum expeteretur a regibus populisque, illos nobilitante quos dignata esset posteris tradere. PLIN. l. 35.

C H A P. XIII.

That physical causes have probably had also a share in the surprizing progress of arts and sciences.

THERE is no room, in fine, to question but that moral causes have contributed to the surprizing progress of poetry and painting in particular ages. But may not physical causes have had also their influence in this same progress? May they not contribute to the amazing difference we observe between the state of arts and sciences in two succeeding ages? Is it not the physical causes that put the moral causes in motion? Is it the liberality of sovereigns, or the applause of one's countrymen, that forms illustrious painters and poets? Or is it not rather the great artists who attract this liberality, and by their wonderful productions force an attention and regard for those arts, which the world did not shew them, while they were yet rude and imperfect. Tacitus observes, that *those times which are fertile of eminent men, abound likewise in such as are capable of doing justice to their merit*^a. Have we not reason to believe, that there are times, in which men of the same country are born with greater capacity and wit than at other times? Is it possible to imagine, for example, that Augustus, had he been served even by two Mæcenas's, would have been able if he had lived in the time of Constantine,

^a *Virtutes iisdem temporibus optime aestimantur quibus facilime signuntur.* TAC. vit. AGRIC.

to change by his largesses the writers of the fourth century into Livys and Ciceros? If Julius II. and Leo X. had reigned in Sweden, is it to be supposed that their munificence would have produced in those northern climates, other Raphaels, Bembus's, and Machiavels? Are all countries proper for producing great poets and painters? And are there not some barren ages in countries capable of such productions?

Whilst I have been meditating on this subject, a great variety of ideas have frequently presented themselves to my mind, which I look upon rather as simple glimmerings than real lights. I cannot therefore after all my reflections, be positive, whether men who are born during a certain space of years, are as much superior to their ancestors and posterity in extent and vigor of mind, as those first men, of whom sacred and profane history makes mention, and who lived to a very great age, were certainly superior to their descendants in an equality of humors and goodness of complexion. However there is a sufficient air of probability in these ideas, to think them worthy of entertaining my reader.

Men frequently attribute physical effects to moral causes. Sometimes we impute to an unlucky or cross accident, those chagrins whose origin is intirely in the intemperature of our humors, or in some disposition of air that oppresses our machine. Had the air been a little more serene, perhaps we should have beheld with indifference, a thing which seems to throw us into the most violent fits of despair. I shall therefore expose here my reflections so much the more readily, as in point of probability and conjecture,

we see ourselves refuted with pleasure, upon discovering a greater solidity in an answer than we really expected. *We that are directed by probability (to make use of Cicero's words) and are incapable of exceeding the limits of what bears at least a resemblance to truth, are ready to refute without obstinacy, and to be refuted ourselves without anger or passion*^a.

My first reflection is, that there are countries and times in which arts and sciences do not flourish, notwithstanding the vigorous concurrence of moral causes in their favor. The Achilles's who appear in those times, do not find a Homer to sing their exploits. Their great actions only furnish future poets with proper subjects to excite them.

My second reflection is, that arts and sciences do not arrive to their full perfection, by a slow advance, proportioned to the time employed in their culture, but by a very sudden progress. They attain this perfection, when moral causes do nothing particular to promote them, but what they had done before for a long time, without having produced any very sensible fruit of their activity. Arts and sciences decline likewise at a time, when moral causes redouble their efforts to support them in that point of elevation, to which they rose, in a manner, of themselves.

My third and last reflection is, that great painters have always been cotemporaries with great poets, and

^a *Nos qui sequimur probabilia, nec ultra id quod verisimile occurserit progredi possumus, & refellere sine pertinacia & refelli sine iracundia parati sumus.* Cic. Tusc. quæst. l. 2.

they

they have both flourished at the same time with such of their countrymen as have been most eminent in other professions. It seems as if a kind of spirit of perfection in their days had shed itself upon the inhabitants of their country. Those professions which flourished together with poetry and painting, fell with them at the same time to neglect and ruin.

First REFLECTION.

IT would be needless to use many arguments to prove, that there are countries, which have never produced any eminent painters or poets. Every body knows, for instance, that we have never had from the extremities of the North but wild poets, coarse versifiers, and frigid colorists. Painting and poetry have never approached the pole nearer than the latitude of Holland; and even in this province we have seen only a poor starved kind of painting. The Dutch poets have shewn a greater vigor and spirit, than their painters. It seems (if I be permitted to jest) that poetry is not so much afraid of the cold as painting.

It has been observed in all ages, that the glory of wit and capacity has been confined in such a manner to particular countries, that even neighbouring provinces have been unable to share it with them. Paterculus says ^a, that one should be no more surprised at seeing so many illustrious orators at Athens, than at not finding at Thebes, Sparta, or Argos, a person celebrated for eloquence. Experience had rendered familiar this unequal distribution of capacities between neighbouring countries. *Different ideas,*

^a PATERCUL. hist. lib. 1.

says a modern author², are like plants and flowers which do not grow alike in all kinds of climates. Perhaps our French soil is no more fit for the reasoning used by the Egyptians, than it is proper for their palms; and without travelling so far, probably our orange-trees which do not grow with such ease here as in Italy, are an indication that there is a certain turn of mind in Italy, which is not altogether like that of France. 'Tis absolutely certain, that by the concatenation and reciprocal dependance between all the parts of the material world, the difference of climates which shews itself sensibly in the plants, must extend itself likewise to the brain, and be productive there of some effect or other. It were to be wished that this author had taken the trouble to unfold this principle. He would have cleared, much better than I can, those truths which I shall endeavour to lay open; he who is possessed in so eminent a degree of the most precious talent a man of learning can be master of, that is, the gift of placing the abstrusest subjects within reach of common capacities, and of rendering the most complicated truths intelligible, with tolerable attention, even to those who never made any study but in his works, of the sciences they explain.

It will not avail to say, that the reason why arts and sciences have not flourished beyond the fifty second degree of North latitude, nor nearer than five and twenty degrees to the line, is because they have not been transplanted to the torrid or frigid Zone. The arts rise of themselves in proper climates: They must therefore have their birth, their

² M. de Fontenelle, digression upon the ancients cradle,

cradle, and their inventors, before they can be transplanted. Who is it that first brought the arts into Ægypt? No body. But the Ægyptians, favored by the climate of their country, gave them birth themselves. The arts would rise of their own accord in countries that have a proper soil for them, were they never to be transplanted thither. Perhaps they would appear somewhat later; however they would certainly make their appearance. Those, in whose country the arts have never flourished, are people who live absolutely in an improper climate. Were it not for this, the arts would rise in those places of themselves, or at least they would have been transplanted thither by means of commerce.

The Greeks, for example, did not travel more frequently into Ægypt, than the Poles, as well as other northern nations, and the English, travel at present into Italy. Nevertheless the Greeks soon transplanted the art of painting from Ægypt into Greece, while its sovereigns and republics, still rude and unpolished, did not think the acquisition of this art to be an affair of any importance. 'Tis thus a field which is left unmanured close to a forest, is sown of itself, and becomes quickly a copse, when the soil is fit for the bearing of trees.

The English these two centuries past have been as fond of painting as any other nation; except the Italians; insomuch that foreign painters, who have settled in England during this period, have gained three times more by their art, than they could have done elsewhere. 'Tis well known, what a value Henry VIII. had for pictures, and with what magnificence he recompenced Holbein. The munificence of

of Q. Elizabeth encouraged all sorts of arts during a reign of near fifty years. Charles I, who lived in great splendor the first fifteen years of his reign, carried his love for painting to a very great height; insomuch that 'tis owing to his excess of passion for this art, that the price of pictures is risen so high in our days. As he employed agents all over Europe to make a collection for him at any rate, whilst Philip IV, King of Spain opened his treasures for the same purpose with the greatest prodigality, the competition of those two monarchs enhanced the price of eminent performances. Thus the treasures of the art became the source of real treasures in commerce ^a. And yet England has not hitherto produced so much as one painter, who deserves to be ranked among the artists of the first, or even of the second class. The English climate has been warm enough to produce a number of eminent men in most sciences and professions. It has even given us good musicians and excellent poets, but it has not favoured us with painters, who have made so great a figure, as the philosophers, poets, and other illustrious worthies of the English nation. The English painters of note may be all reduced to three portrait painters ^b.

Those painters who flourished in England under Henry VIII and Charles I, were foreigners, who carried into that island an art which the inhabitants of the country could not keep. Holbein

^a DRYDEN, catalogue of painters.

^b COOPER, DOBSON, RILEY.

and Lely were Germans ; and Vandyke a Fleming. Those who even in our days have been esteemed as the chief painters of the country, were not Englishmen. Vario was a Neapolitan, and Kneller a German. The medals struck in England in Cromwell's time, and those made there under Charles II and James II were very good work, but done by a stranger : This was Roëttiers of Antwerp, Guibbons's countryman, who was for a considerable time the principal sculptor in London.

We even observe that the design is generally bad in works done in England : If ever they are worth admiring, 'tis for the hand and execution of the workman, and not for the design of the artist. There are certainly no workmen in the world that have a greater beauty in the execution, or that know how to manage their tools better than the English. But they have not been able as yet to attain to that taste in their designs, which some foreign artists carried over with them to London ; where it has never stirred out of their shops.

'Tis not only in excessive cold or wet countries, that the arts cannot flourish ; there are even temperate climates, where they are in a drooping condition. Tho' the Spaniards have had several magnificent sovereigns, who have been as much captivated with the charms of painting, as any pope whatsoever ; yet this nation, so fertile of great personages, and even of great poets in verse and prose, has not produced a painter of the first class, and can hardly furnish us with two of the second. Charles V,

Philip

Philip II., Philip IV., and Charles II., were obliged to employ foreign painters to work at the Escorial and in other places.

The liberal arts have never travelled further than Europe, unless it be to take an airing, (if the expression be allowed me) on the coasts of Asia and Afric. 'Tis observable, that the Europeans, and those who are born on the coasts bordering upon Europe, have always been fitter than other people for arts and sciences, as well as political government. Wheresoever the Europeans have carried their arms, they have generally subdued the inhabitants. They have vanquished them when they were only ten to thirty, and very frequently when they have fought ten against a hundred. Without ascending so high as Alexander the Great and the Romans, let us only recal to mind with what ease a handful of Spaniards and Portuguese, by the help of their industry and the arms they carried with them from Europe, subdued the two Indies. To alledge that the Indians would not have been so easily conquered, if they had been masters of the same military machines, the same arms and discipline as their conquerors, proves the superiority of genius in the Europeans, who had invented all those things, when the Asiatics and Americans had made no such discovery, tho' they had been continually at war with one another. If it be true that chance taught the Chinese sooner than us the use of gunpowder and printing, we have carried both these arts, as soon as we discovered them, to such a degree of perfection, that we are capable now of giving lessons to the Chinese. Our missionaries at present have the direction of the casting of their

cannon, and we have taught them the practice of printing with separate types. Every body knows, that the Chinese used to print at that time with copper-plates, which could be of service only in the printing of one thing; whereas the separate types, without mentioning several other conveniences which they afford to printers, have likewise that of being of use in the impression of different sheets. We print Virgil's *Aeneid* with the same types, that were used in printing the new Testament. When the Europeans first entered China, the astronomers of that country, who had been exceedingly well paid for many ages, were incapable of foretelling an eclipse with any exactness. 'Tis now upwards of two thousand years since the European astronomers have been most accurate in this kind of prediction.

The arts seem even to suffer, when they are kept at too great a distance from Europe. Tho' the *Ægyptians* were the first inventors of painting and sculpture, they have not had so great a share as the Greeks and Italians, in the glory of these arts. The sculptures which are agreed to have been done by the *Ægyptians*, that is, those which are seen on the ancient buildings of *Ægypt*, as their obelisks and mummies, are nothing to compare to such as were executed in Greece and Italy. If we happen to meet with a sphinx of surprizing beauty, 'tis probably the work of some Greek sculptor, who diverted himself with making *Ægyptian* figures, as our painters take a pleasure sometimes in imitating the figures of the basso-relievos, and the pictures of the Indies and China. Have we not had artists ourselves,

selves, who have diverted themselves with making sphinxes? There are several such in the gardens of Versailles, which are original pieces done by our modern sculptors. Pliny does not extol in his work any one master-piece in painting and sculpture done by an *Ægyptian*, tho' he gives us such a long list of the performances of famous artists. We even find * that Greek sculptors used to travel to *Ægypt* for work. To return to Pliny's silence, it is observable that this author lived at a time, when the *Ægyptian* works were still extant. Petronius writes, that there were none but bad painters trained up in *Ægypt*. He observes likewise that the *Ægyptians* had done a vast deal of prejudice to this art, by inventing rules proper for rendering its apprenticeship less tedious, and the practice less laborious.

'Tis now thirty years ago since Sir John Chardin has given us the designs of the ruins of Persepolis. We may see by these that the kings of Persia, notwithstanding their immense opulence so much boasted of in ancient history, had but very indifferent workmen. Probably, the Greek artists were not so ready to go and seek their fortunes in the Persian service as the Greek soldiers. Be that as it will, one is not at all surprized, after having seen those designs, that Alexander set fire to a palace, whose ornament and furniture appeared coarse and indifferent to him, in comparison to what he had seen in Greece. The Persians under Darius were what those that inhabit the same country are at present, that is, extreme patient and able workmen, with respect to their manual labor, but void

* DIODORUS SICULUS, book 1.

of genius to invent, and of talents to imitate the most ingaging beauties of nature.

Europe is over-stocked with stuffs, china-ware, and other curiosities of China, and the eastern parts of Asia. Nothing can be less picturesque than the taste of the design and coloring, which prevails in these works. There have been several translations published of the poetic compositions of the eastern nations. When we find a stroke in its proper place, or a probable adventure, we admire it; and this is as much as we can say of them. Wherefore all these translations, which seldom go thro' a second edition, have only a transient vogue, for which they are indebted to the foreign air of the original, and to the inconsiderate fondness which numbers of people have for singular things. The same curiosity which sets people a running after the countrymen of the authors of those writings, when they appear in France dressed after their own country fashion, makes us desirous at first of reading these translations.

If there had been any poets of equal merit with Homer among the Brachmans and ancient Persians, the Greeks who travelled to inrich their libraries, in the same manner as people in our days cross the seas in order to fill their magazines, would in all probability have rendered them into their language. One of their princes would have ordered a Greek translation of them, as one of the Ptolemies is said to have had the Bible done into that tongue, tho' this prince had no notion of the Divine inspiration of its penmen.

When the Spaniards discovered the continent of America, they found two empires that had flourished
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for several years, those of Peru and Mexico : and the art of painting had been cultivated for a long time in those empires. The people endowed with an incredible patience and slight of hand, had even created the art of making a kind of Mosaic with the feathers of birds. 'Tis astonishing that human hands could have sufficient dexterity to range and reduce into the form of colored figures, so many different filaments. But as these people had no genius, they were, in spite of all their dexterity, very coarse artists. They understood neither the most simple rules of design, nor the first principles of composition, perspective, or chiaro-scuro. They did not so much as know how to paint with minerals and other natural colors which come to us from their country. They have seen since that time some of the best pictures of Italy, a vast number of which have been sent by the Spaniards into the West-Indies. Their new masters have likewise shewn them how to make use of their pencil and colors, but have not been able to render them skilful painters. The Indians, who have been so docile in other arts, which they have learnt of the Spaniards, as to become better masons, for instance, than their masters, have found nothing in the European pictures within their reach, except the vivacity of the colors. This they have not only imitated with success, but have even surpassed their originals, by what I have heard from those who have seen several cupolas painted in Mexico by Indian artists.

The Chinese, who are so curious in their own country paintings, have little or no taste for the European pictures, in which we see (say they) too many

black spots ; for 'tis thus they call our shades. After reflecting on what has been hitherto alledged, and on several other things which are generally known, and are sufficient to prove my proposition, I cannot help being of Fontenelle's opinion, who speaking of the knowledge and turn of mind of the eastern people, says ; *^a I am really inclined every day more and more to believe, that there is a certain genius, which has yet travelled but a very little way out of Europe.*

As there are countries, in which moral causes have never been productive of great painters or poets ; so there are times wherein moral causes are unable to form eminent artists, even in those countries, which at other times produce them with the greatest ease, and, as it were, spontaneously. One would imagine, that capricious nature brings forth these great artists, only just when her fancy pleases.

Before Julius II there had been several popes in Italy, who distinguished themselves by their liberality towards painters and men of letters, but could never with all their magnificence give wings to artists, so as to make them reach to that pitch of perfection, to which such numbers of their profession attained under the pontificate of this pope. Laurence of Medicis distributed for a long time those royal bounties at Florence, which induced people to give him the surname of Magnificent ; and the greatest part of his liberalities were bestowed with discretion on all sorts of real merit. The Bentivoglios did the same thing at Bologna, and the princes of

^a Plurality of Worlds. Sixth evening.

the house of Este at Ferrara. The Viscontis and the Sforzas were encouragers of the polite arts at Milan. And yet no body appeared in those times, whose works could be compared to such as were afterwards produced, upon the restoration of polite arts and learning. It seems as if men eminent in all kind of merit, who, pursuant to one's common way of thinking, ought to have been distributed into several ages, all waited for the pontificate of Julius II to make their appearance,

Let us now turn our eyes a while to what passed in France, with regard to poetry and painting. Did the moral causes wait, 'till Le Sueur, Le Brun, Corneille, La Fontaine, and Racine had shewn themselves; before they would encourage painting and poetry? Can it be said, that the effects have been seen to proceed so quickly in our country from the action of moral causes, that we must attribute thereto the surprizing success of eminent artists. Before Francis I. we have had princes who have been very liberal to men of merit, without having been able, notwithstanding all their largesses, of having the honor of producing a French painter or poet, whose works could have been put any ways in competition in future times, with those which appeared under Lewis XIII and Lewis XIV. There are scarce any fragments remaining of those times either in verse or prose, that we can read with any pleasure. The chancellor de l'Hopital says in his harangue, which he pronounced before the states of the kingdom assembled at Orleans: *That good King Lewis XII used to take a pleasure in hearing the farces and*

^a In 1561.

comedies, even those which were written with the greatest liberty, because he said he learnt several things that were done in his kingdom, which would have otherwise escaped his knowledge. Of all those farces composed under Lewis XII or before, that of Patelin is the only one that is preserved in our cabinets.

The great king Francis was one of the most zealous protectors, that the arts and sciences could ever boast of. Every body knows what favor, or to speak more exactly, what friendship he shewed to Roux, to Andrea del Sarto, to Leonardo da Vinci, (who died in his arms) as likewise to every one that was illustrious for talent or merit.

With what profusion did not he pay for the pictures he had ordered to be made by Raphael? His liberality and kind reception drew numbers of painters into France; but tho' his bounties were bestowed continually on the professors of this art during a reign of thirty three years, they could never form an eminent painter amongst his own subjects. Those painters who settled at that time in France, died without eleves, such at least as were worthy of them; in the same manner as animals transported into a very different climate, die without leaving any of the same breed behind them.

This generous prince was no less fond of poetry than painting, and he used even to write verses sometimes himself. His sister Margarite of Valois, the first of the two queens of Navarre that bore that name, used likewise to compose verses. We have an intire volume of her poems, under the name of *Marguerites Francoises*, or the *French pearls*. This reign produced therefore a great quantity of poems; but

but those of Clement Marot and St Gelais, are the only ones almost that are read in our days. The rest serve for ornament to those libraries, in which scarce books are as much intitled to have a place as good ones. As the changes which have happened in our language do not hinder us from taking a pleasure still in reading those fragments that Marot composed within the sphere of his genius, which was not suited for great works ; so they would not make us disrelish the works of his cotemporaries, were they interspersed with the same beauties as those we find in the writings of poets who flourished under Lewis XIV.

Henry II and Diana of Valentinois were very fond of the Muses. Charles IX respected them so far as to sacrifice, as it were, his person to them ; and the verses which he composed for Ronsard, are equal to the very best that were written by that illustrious poet.

*Ta lyre qui ravit par de si doux accords
Te donne les esprits dont je n'ai que le corps,
Le maitre elle t'en rend, & te scait introduire,
Ou le plus fier tyran ne peut avoir d'empire.*

*Thy lyre, which charms us with its tuneful strings,
Subdues those souls that scorn to yield to kings,
Extends thy sway and captivating band,
Where the fierce tyrant can have no command.*

This prince made the famous James Amiot, son to a butcher of Melun, great Almoner of France. Every body knows the excessive profusion of Henry III towards the French Pleiades, or the society of the seven brightest stars of the French poetry under

his reign. He did not practise towards them the above-mentioned maxim of his brother Charles IX relating to the subsistence proper to be given to poets. All the great wits who lived under Henry III, and even those who frequently abused their talents to preach and write against him, had a share in his prodigality. At the time here mentioned, poets and men of letters were admitted to a kind of familiarity with our kings. They approached them with as much privacy, and were as well received as the greatest lords of the court. And yet all these favors and honors were insufficient to carry even so much as one poet, during that period, to the top of Parnassus. 'Tis surprising that so much encouragement produced so little fruit in a country, where one kind look from the sovereign is able to send twenty persons of distinction to dare certain death at a breach with the greatest intrepidity.

'Tis natural for a court to be passionately fond of every thing that is agreeable to the inclination and taste of its master; and the court of France has constantly excelled all others in this respect. Wherefore I leave the reader to judge, whether it was thro' the fault of moral causes, that there was not a Moliere or a Corneille at the court of the princes of the house of Valois. Were not Terence, Plautus, Horace, Virgil, and the other great authors of antiquity, who contributed so greatly to form the poets of the seventeenth century, in the hands of the great wits of the courts of Francis I and Henry III? Is it because Ronfard and his cotemporaries did not understand the learned tongues, they composed works, whose taste has so little a resemblance with that of

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the better sort of the Greek and Roman writings? No, so far from that, their greatest defect is to have imitated them in too servile a manner, and to have attempted to speak Greek and Latin with French words.

Our late king made several as judicious and magnificent foundations, as could have been established by the Romans, in favor of those arts which depend on the design. In order to give young people, that were born with a genius for painting, all imaginable convenience and ease for improving their talents, he founded an academy for them at Rome. This was giving them a kind of settlement in the country of the polite arts. Those eleves that shew any glimmering of genius, are maintained there long enough to have an opportunity of learning their profession. Thus respect and recompence wait for the able artist, and even sometimes, as we ourselves have seen, precede their merit. And yet fifty years care and expence has scarce produced three or four painters, whose works have the true stamp of immortality.

'Tis also observable, that those three French painters, who were so great an honor to our nation under the reign of Lewis XIV, were no ways indebted to these foundations, having been quite formed in their art before these settlements were made. In the year sixteen hundred and sixty one, that is, the year in which Lewis XIV took the reins of government into his own hands, and in which his *Age* began, Poussin was seventy years old, and Le Sueur was dead. Le Brun was then forty, and if the magnificence

fidence of the sovereign excited him to work, it was not that however which rendered him capable of excelling. In fine, Nature, whom this great prince obliged so often to bend under his will, refused obstinately to obey him in this article. She would not produce under his reign such a number of able painters as she brought forth of her own accord under Leo X. As the physical causes denied their concurrence here with the moral ones, the whole power of this prince could never raise such a school in France, as those that were formed of a sudden at other times, at Rome, Venice, and Bologna.

The immense expences of Lewis XIV. had no other success, but that of forming a large number of excellent sculptors. As a person that knows how to make handsome statues is a good sculptor ; and as it is not necessary in order to merit this title, to have published some of those great works which we have spoken of in the first part of our reflections ; we may venture to say, that sculpture does not demand so much genius as painting. A sovereign that cannot raise a certain number of young people, who by means of such helps as he supplies them with, are capable of becoming so many Raphaels or Caraccios, may find a great many who by his encouragement are able to attain to a great perfection in sculpture. The school which has not been erected at a time, wherein the physical causes concur with the moral ones, produces therefore men eminent in sculpture and engraving, instead of giving birth to painters of the first order. This is exactly what has happened in France. Since the restoration of arts,

arts, there have been no where so many excellent sculptors and good engravers of all sorts, as in this kingdom under the reign of the late king.

The Italians, of whom we first learnt the art of sculpture, have been obliged these many years to employ our artists. Puget, a sculptor from Marseilles^{*}, was preferred to several Italian workmen, to carve two of the four statues designed for adorning the niches of the pilasters, which support the dome of the magnificent church of St Mary of Carignano at Genoa. 'Twas he also that made the statues of St Sebastian and St Alexander Sauli. I am not inclinable to injure the reputation of Domenico Guidi who made that of St John, nor the other artist who carved the figure of St Bartholomew; but the Genoese themselves regret at present that Puget did not carve the four statues. When the Jesuits at Rome erected, about five and forty years ago, the altar of St Ignatius in the church called by the name of Jesus, they published their intention of giving the execution of the two groups of five figures of white marble, which were to be placed on each side of this sumptuous monument, to whosoever should produce the best model. The most able sculptors that were then in Italy presented each his model, and these having been exposed to public view, it was decided by general consent, that the model of Theodon, who was then sculptor of the fabric of St Peter, and that of Le Gros, both Frenchmen, deserved the preference. They made therefore those two groups, which are ranked at present among the master-pieces of modern Rome. The brazen balustrade inclosing this al-

^{*} Deceased at Marseilles 1695, aged 72.

tar, and composed of angels sporting among rows of vines interwoven with ears of corn, is likewise the work of a French sculptor. The five best engravers in brass we have ever seen, were Frenchmen either by birth or education; and the same may be said of engravers in other metals. The goldsmith's trade, whether in large or small work, as well as all those arts whose value is raised by the design, are more perfect in France than in any other country. But as painting does not depend so much on moral causes, as the above-mentioned arts, the progress thereof has not been in proportion to the assistances it has received within these fourscore years.

Second REFLECTION.

That the arts attain to their highest degree of elevation by a sudden progress, and that the effects of moral causes cannot carry them to that point of perfection, to which they seem to have spontaneously risen.

THUS I have given my first reason for affirming, that men are not born with so much genius in one country as in another, and that even in the same country there are certain periods, in which people have not so much genius as at other times. My second reason seems to me as strong as the first. This is, that there are particular times, in which men attain in very few years to a surprizing pitch of perfection in those very arts and professions, which they cultivated almost ineffectually before for a long succession of ages. This prodigy comes to pass without any new intervention of the moral

moral causes, to which so miraculous a progress can be attributed. On the contrary, arts and sciences decline, when moral causes redouble their efforts to support them in that point of elevation, to which they seem to have been raised by a secret influence.

The reader is already aware of what kind of proofs I am going to alledge, in order to shew that the progress of the polite arts was extremely rapid, and that these arts breaking thro' the bounds of a long space of time, leaped of a sudden from their dawn to their noon of perfection. Painting was revived in Italy as early as the thirteenth century, by Cimabue's^a pencil. There were several painters who acquired some reputation in the two following centuries, but none of them attained to any eminent degree of perfection. The works of those painters, so much cried up in their own times, have had the same fate in Italy, as Ronsard's poems in France, that is, of not being any longer inquired for.

In 1480 painting was yet a rude and imperfect art, notwithstanding it had been constantly cultivated during the space of two hundred years. They used to draw nature at that time with a very scrupulous exactness, but without giving her a grand or noble air. The heads were finished with so much care, that one might tell the very hairs of their heads and beards ; the draperies were of the most glittering colors and heightened with gold : In fine, the artist's hand had acquired some ease and dexterity, but without the least fire, or spark of genius. No body had as yet hit upon the beauties that are

^a born in 1240.

drawn from the *naked* of bodies represented in action. There had been no discovery yet made in the chiaro-scuro, nor in the aerial perspective, no more than in the elegance of the contours, or in the fine air of the draperies. Those painters knew how to range the figures of a picture, but without being able to dispose them pursuant to the present rules of picturesque composition. Before Raphael and his cotemporaries, the martyrdom of a saint seemed not to move any of the spectators. The assistants, whom the painter introduced into this tragic action, were only to fill up that space in the canvas which the saint and the executioners left empty.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century, painting, which had hitherto walked with so slow a pace towards its perfection, that its progress was almost imperceptible, advanced all of a sudden with gigantic strides. A kind of Gothic painting commenced the ornaments of several edifices, whose last embellishments are the master-pieces of Raphael and his cotemporaries. Cardinal John Medicis³, who did not grow old in his purple, having been chosen pope at thirty seven years of age, renewed the decoration of the church of St Peter of Montorio, and set people to work at it a little after he had received his cardinal's hat. The chapels which are on the left hand coming in, and were done the first, are embellished with paintings and sculptures of a very indifferent taste, and somewhat bordering upon the Gothic; but the opposite chapels were adorned by artists of the very first class. The first

LEO X,

as

as you come into the church, is done by *Frà Sebastiano del Piombo*: Another is enriched with statues by Daniel of Volterra: In fine, we see on the high altar the transfiguration by Raphael, a picture as well known in Europe as Virgil's *Aeneid*.

The fate of sculpture has been the very same as that of painting. One would have imagined, that the eyes of artists, which had been hitherto shut, had been opened all of a sudden by a kind of miracle. A poet would say, that every new performance of Raphael produced a painter. And yet the moral causes exerted themselves no more at that time in favor of the arts, than they had done before, tho' to no purpose, during the space of two centuries. The antique statues, and basso-relievo's, which Raphael and his cotemporaries knew how to make such a good use of, were visible to their predecessors, without being of any service to them. If some antiques were discovered, which their predecessors had not seen, what a vast number must they have beheld, which perished before Raphael could have sight of them? How comes it, that these predecessors did not rake and rummage into the ruins of ancient Rome, like Raphael and his cotemporaries? 'Tis because they had no genius: 'Tis because their taste differed from that which we observe in the Marcus Aurelius, and all the other works of sculpture and architecture, which had been discovered and dug up a long while before Raphael.

That same prodigy which happened at Rome, came to pass at the same time at Venice, Florence, and all the other cities of Italy. Men sprung up

there, as it were, from under ground, who immortalized their memories by their skill in their professions, and were all far superior to the masters they had learnt of ; men without predecessors to imitate, and eleves of their own genius. Venice saw itself enriched all of a sudden with excellent painters, notwithstanding the republic had not founded lately any new academies, nor proposed new prizes. Those happy influences which were then shed on the art of painting, went in search of Corregio to his village, to raise there a painter of a particular character. He was the first that attempted to hang figures really in the air, and which form a *cieling*, as painters express it. Raphael, in painting the nuptials of Psyche on the vault of the saloon of the little Farnese, has treated his subject, as if it were done on a tapestry fastened to the ceiling. Corregio hung figures in the air in the assumption of the virgin Mary, which he drew in the cupola of the cathedral church of Parma, and in the ascension of Christ painted in the cupola of the abbey of St John of the same city. This very thing only would be sufficient to shew the action of physical causes in the restoration of arts. All those schools that were formed at that time, led by different roads to the perfection of their art. Their manner did not resemble one another, tho' they were all so extremely good, as Cicero says^a upon a like occasion, *that we should have been vexed, had not each school pursued its own.*

^a *Omnes inter se dissimiles, ita tamen ut neminem velis esse sibi dissimilem.* Cic. de orat. l. 3.

The North received likewise some beams of this influence. Albert Durer, Holbein, and Luke of Leyden, were much better painters than any that had hitherto appeared in their country. There are several pictures of Holbein preserved in the cabinet of the library of Basil, two of which demonstrate the surprising progress which painting made at that time. The first of these pictures, which by an inscription at the bottom appears to have been made in 1516, represents a school-master teaching children to read. It has all the faults with which we have reproached those paintings that were done before Raphael's time. The second, which exhibits the manner our Saviour was taken down from the cross, and whose inscription shews it to have been done in 1521, is in the right taste. Holbein had seen some new pictures, and had benefited thereby, in the same manner as Raphael improved by seeing the works of Michael Angelo. The Altar-piece which represents in eight separate pictures the principal events of the passion, and is preserved in the town house of Basil, must have been drawn by Holbein before the Roman Catholic worship was suppressed in that city, or the protestant Religion established, and pictures expelled the churches in 1527. These eight pieces may be compared with the best performances of Raphael's eleves for the poetry, and preferred to them with respect to the coloring. There appears even a greater knowledge of the chiaro-scuro, than other painters were masters of in those times. We perceive here some marvelous incidents of light, especially in the picture presenting

presenting Christ made prisoner in the garden of Olives.

The same event happened in France under the reign of Lewis XIII as that which fell out in Italy under Julius II. A bright sun was seen to shine forth of a sudden, which had been ushered in by a very weak dawn. Our poetry rose up, as it were, in an instant, and foreign nations, which had hitherto despised it, fell suddenly in love with it. Peter Corneille, to the best of my remembrance, is the first French profane poet, of whom a piece of any extent has been rendered into a foreign language.

We find some admirable stanzas in the works of several French poets, who wrote before the time above pointed out as the epoch, from which we are to date the splendor of the French poetry. Malherbe is inimitable in the number and cadence of his verses: but as he had a better ear than genius, the greatest part of his verses are commendable only for the mechanism and harmonious arrangement of his words, for which he had a surprizing capacity. They did not even require at that time, that poems should consist, as it were, of *contiguous beauties*; some shining passages were sufficient to recommend a whole piece. The poverty of the other verses was excused, being considered as made only for connecting the former, wherefore they were called, as we learn from abbot de Marolles's memoirs, *passage-verses*.

There are some stanzas in the works of Desportes and De Bertaut, that are able to vie with the very best that have been wrote since Corneille; and yet those that would attempt the intire perusal of the works

of those two poets, on the credit of some fragments they might have heard recited, would soon be tired of their undertaking. The books now mentioned resemble those chains of mountains, where we must traverse a vast deal of wild and desert land, before we can meet with a pleasant cultivated valley.

There had been a theatre for about two hundred years in France, when Corneille first wrote his *Cid*. And yet what progress did our dramatic poetry make during that time? None at all. Corneille found our stage almost as rude and barbarous, as it was under Lewis II. Our drama made a greater progress from 1635 to 1665, and received far greater improvements during those thirty years, than all the three preceding centuries. Rotrou appeared at the same time as Corneille: Racine, Moliere, and Quinault started up soon after. Could one observe a sufficient degree of perfection in the dramatic poetry of Garnier and Mairet, to have room to hope, that such eminent poets as Corneille and Moliere would so soon appear in our poetic hemisphere? Who are the poetic ancestors, as it were, of La Fontaine? And to mention a word with regard to our painters, were Freminet and Vouet, who worked under Lewis XIII, deserving of the honor of being the immediate predecessors of Poussin, Sueur, and Le Brun?

Those great men, who compose what we call the Augustan age, were not formed during the happy days of the reign of that emperor. Every body knows, that the commencement of the age of Augustus was a time of fire and sword. These days, so happy for the whole universe, do not commence their date till the battle of Actium, when the tute-

lary genius of Rome overthrew with one blow, Antony, Discord, and Cleopatra. Virgil was forty years old, when this event happened. Let us take notice of the following picture he draws of those very times, in which he was formed in his art, and which he so elegantly describes to have been the reign of Mars and Fury.

*Quippe ubi fas versum atque nefas, tot bella per orbem,
Tam multæ scelerum facies, non ullus aratro
Dignus honor, squalent abductis arva colonis,
Et curvæ rigidum falces conflantur in ensim.
Hinc movet Euphrates, illinc Germania bellum;
Vicinæ nuptis inter se legibus urbes
Arma ferunt, sævit toto Mars impius orbe.*

VIRG. Georg. I. 1.

Where fraud and rapine, right and wrong confound,
Where impious arms from ev'ry part resound,
And monstrous crimes in ev'ry shape are crown'd. }
The peaceful peasant to the wars is prest;
The fields lye fallow in inglorious rest:
The plain no pasture to the flock affords,
The crooked scythes are streigthened into swords:
And there Euphrates her soft off-spring arms,
And here the Rhine rebellows with alarms;
The neighb'ring cities range on sev'ral sides,
Perfidious Mars long plighted leagues divides, }
And o'er the wasted world in triumph rides. }

DRYDEN.

Those who had raised themselves to any particular degree of credit or fame, were more exposed than others in the proscriptions, and during all the horrors of the first years of the reign of Augustus.

CICERO,

Cicero, who was sacrificed in those unhappy times abovementioned by Virgil, died the victim of his abilities.

*Largus & exundans letho dedit ingenii fons
Ingenio manus est & cervix cæsa.*

JUV. SAT. 10.

*But both those orators so much renown'd,
In their own depths of eloquence were drown'd:
The hand and head were never lost, of those
Who dealt in doggrel, or who punn'd in prose.*

DRYDEN.

Horace was five and thirty years old, when the battle of Actium was fought. The liberality of Augustus excited several great poets to write, but they were become eminent already in their profession before this encouragement.

But that which is sufficient alone to convince us that the moral causes do but concur with another second cause stronger than themselves, to the surprizing progress which arts and learning make in certain ages, is, that those arts and sciences fall into a state of decay at the very time when the moral causes are using their utmost efforts to support them in that point of elevation to which they spontaneously rose. Those great men, who formed themselves, as it were, with their own hands, were never able to train up either by their lessons, or their examples, eleves of equal fame and ability with themselves. Their successors, who had received instructions in their art from the most eminent masters; successors, who for this and several other reasons, ought to have surpassed their masters, had they

they been born with an equal genius, have occupied but not filled the place of their predecessors. The first successors of those great masters have been replaced by disciples of a still inferior merit. At length the genius of arts and sciences disappears entirely, till the revolution of ages comes to raise it out of its tomb, where it seems to bury itself for a long series of time, after having shewn itself only for a few years.

In that very same country, where nature had produced so liberally, and without any extraordinary assistance, the famous painters of the age of Leo X ; the recompences and cares of the academy of St Luke, established by Gregory XII and by Sixtus Quintus, the attention of sovereigns, and in fine, all the efforts of moral causes have never been able to give a posterity to those great artists, who sprung, as it were, from their own loins. The schools of Venice, and Florence degenerated in sixty years. 'Tis true, painting supported itself with splendor at Rome during a greater number of years ; for even towards the middle of the last century there were some eminent masters in that city. But those painters were all strangers, such as Poussin, the eleves of the Carracci, who came to Rome to display the abilities of the school of Bologna, and some others. As this school had flourished later than that of Rome, it has also survived the Roman school. But, if the expression be allowed me, there were no young trees, that grew up near these great oaks. Poussin, during thirty years constant labor in a school in the very heart of Rome, formed only one eleve of any fame in painting, tho' this great man was as capable

of teaching his art, as any master that ever professed it. In the same city, but not at same time, Raphael, who died as young as his scholars, had formed in the course of ten or a dozen years a school of five or six painters, whose works are at present a part of the glory of their master. In fine all the Italian schools, such as those of Venice, Rome, Parma, Bologna, where great genius's appeared in such numbers during the flourishing state of the art of painting, are grown at present intirely barren.

This decay happened just at a time when Italy enjoyed the happiest days it had seen since the destruction of the Roman empire. All those conjunctures which could decide the fate of the polite arts (were it true that their fate depended intirely on moral causes) concurred to make them flourish at the very time they began to decline. The wars of Italy lasted from the expedition of our king Charles VIII to Naples, 'till the peace concluded at Cambrai 1529 between the Emperor Charles the Vth and Francis I, which was soon followed with the last revolution of the state of Florence. During the space of thirty four years, Italy, to express myself in the words of her own historians, had been trampled under foot by barbarous nations. The kingdom of Naples was conquered four or five times by different princes, and the state of Milan underwent more frequent revolutions. The Venetians saw several times their enemies armies from their turrets, and Florence was almost constantly in war, either with the family of Medicis, who wanted to inslave her, or with the inhabitants of Pisa, whom they were desirous of subduing. Rome more than once beheld hostile

hostile or suspected troops within its walls, and this capital of polite arts was plundered by the arms of Charles V with as much barbarity as if it had been stormed by the Turks. And yet it was exactly during those thirty four years that the arts and sciences made that progress in Italy, which is considered in our days as a kind of prodigy.

Since the last revolution of the state of Florence to the close of the sixteenth century, the tranquillity of Italy was not interrupted but by wars on their frontiers, or of a very short continuance. During this space of time none of its cities were ransack'd, nor was there any violent revolution in the five principal governments, into which it is divided. The Germans and French made no more invasions, except the expedition of the duke of Guise to Naples under Paul the IVth, which was rather an inroad than a war. The seventeenth century was a time of rest and plenty for Italy till its very last year. It was during the time now mentioned, that the Venetians amassed immense sums of money, and made their famous gold chain, to which they added some new rings every year. Then it was that Sixtus Quintus put five millions of gold crowns into the apostolic treasure; that the bank of Genoa was replenished; that the Grand Dukes of Tuscany heaped up such immense sums; that the dukes of Ferrara filled their coffers; in short, that all those who governed in Italy, except the viceroys of Naples, and the governors of Milan, found, after the usual and cautionary expences, a superfluity which might be saved from the revenue of each year; which is undoubtedly the surest symptom

symptom of the flourishing state of a government. Nevertheless it was during those years of prosperity that the schools of Rome, Florence, Venice, and successively that of Bologna, grew poor and barren of good artists. As their noon of perfection, if I may express myself so, was very near their first rising, so their setting succeeded quickly their noon. I am not willing to predict the decadency of our age, notwithstanding what a person of very great capacity has wrote upwards of forty years ago, speaking of the excellent works which his age had produced. ^a *We must candidly confess, that 'tis now ten years since that happy time is elapsed.* Before M. Boileau died he saw a lyric poet take wing, born with the talents of those ancient poets, to whom Virgil allots an honorable place in the Elysian fields, for having given the first lessons of morality to fierce and savage man. The works of those ancient poets, which formed one of the first links of society, and gave birth to the fable of Amphion, did not contain maxims more sage than the odes of the author here mentioned, whom nature seemed to have favored with a genius, only to adorn morality, and give an amiable dress to virtue. Others, who are still living, deserve I should make an honorable mention of their works, but as Velleius Paterculus says in an almost similar case, *Vivorum censura difficultis*: 'Tis too delicate a point to attempt to give a judgment of the living poets.

If we ascend to the age of Augustus, we shall find that learning and arts, especially poetry, began to decline, when every thing conspired to make

^a *M. de Fontenelle, digression on the ancients and moderns.*

them

them flourish: They degenerated in the most glorious times of the Roman empire. Numbers of people think that the arts and sciences perished under the ruins of that monarchy subverted and laid waste by the northern nations. They supposed therefore that the inundations of Barbarians, attended with the intire confusion of society in most of those places where they settled, deprived the conquered people of the proper conveniences, and even of the very desire to cultivate the polite arts. The arts, they say, could never subsist in a country whose cities were changed into fields, and their fields into deserts.

*Pierides donec Romam & Tyberina fluenta
Deseruere, Italicae expulsæ protinus oris.*

*Tanti causa mali Latio gens aspera aperto
Sæpius irrumpens: sunt jussi vertere morem
Ausonide vitti, victoris vocibus usi.
Cessit amor musarum; artes subiere repente
Indignæ; atque opibus cuncti incubuere parandis.*

VIDA Poetic. I. 1.

*Till from the Hesperian plains and Tyber chas'd
From Rome the banish'd sisters fled at last;
Driv'n by the barbarous nations, who from far
Burst into Latium with a tide of war.
Hence a vast change of their old manners sprung,
The slaves were forc'd to speak their master's tongue.
No honors now were paid the sacred muse,
But all were bent on mercenary views.*

PITT.

This opinion is not the less false, for its being so generally received. False opinions are established with

with as much facility in history, as in philosophy. The arts and sciences were already degenerated and fallen into a state of decay, notwithstanding they had been cultivated with care, when those nations, the scourges of mankind, quitted the northern snows. We may look upon the bust of Caracalla as the last gasp of the Roman sculpture. The two triumphal arches erected in honor of his father Severus, the chapters of the columns in the Septizon, which were afterwards removed into different churches, when that building was pulled down, and the remaining statues which are known to have been made at that time, sufficiently demonstrate that sculpture and architecture began to decline under that prince and his children. Every body knows that the Low-relieves of the largest of those two triumphal arches were done by an indifferent hand. 'Tis natural however to suppose that the most able sculptors were employed about it, were it only out of a regard due to the place where it was erected. This was in the most considerable part of the town at the further end of the *Forum Romanum*, and, as we have reason to believe, at the foot of one of those stairs destined for ascending to the Capitol, which was called *the hundred steps*. Now Severus's reign preceded the first taking of Rome by Alaricus, upwards of two hundred years; and from that emperor's time the arts were continually in a state of decline.

The monuments that are extant, of the successors of Severus, are still a less honor to sculpture, than the Low-relieves of the largest of the two triumphal arches erected to the memory of that prince.

The

The Roman medals, struck after the reign of Caracalla, and that of Macrinus his successor, who survived him but two years, are much inferior to those that were struck under the preceding emperors. After Gordianus Pius they degenerated in a more sensible manner, and under Gallienus, who reigned fifty years after Caracalla, they became a most wretched coin. There is neither taste nor design in their engraving, nor judgment in their coining. As those medals were a kind of coin destined to instruct posterity with respect to the virtues and great exploits of the prince under whose reign they were struck, as well as to serve the uses of traffick, 'tis highly probable, that the Romans, who were as jealous as any other nation of their honor, employed for this kind of work the most able artists they could find. 'Tis therefore reasonable to judge by the beauty of the medals, of the state of engraving under each emperor ; for engraving is an art which always goes hand in hand with sculpture. The observations made by means of medals, are confirmed by what we remark in those pieces of sculpture, whose time is known, and which are still existing. For instance, the medals of Constantine the Great, who reigned fifty years after Gallienus, are very ill engraved, and of a poor taste ; and we find likewise, by the triumphal arch erected to the memory of this prince, which is still to be seen at Rome, that under his reign, and a hundred years before the Barbarians took possession of that city, sculpture was become as coarse and imperfect an art, as it was in the commencement of the first Punic war.

When the senate and people of Rome determined to erect this triumphal arch in honor of Constantine, there was not in all probability in the capital of the empire, a sculptor able to undertake the work. Notwithstanding the respect they had at Rome for the memory of Trajan, they stripped the arch, erected to that prince, of its ornaments ; and without any regard to conformity or fitness, they employed them in the fabric of that which they erected to Constantine. The triumphal arches of the Romans were not monuments invented merely by fancy, like ours ; neither were their ornaments mere arbitrary imbellishments, directed only by the ideas of the architect. As we have no real triumphs, and after our victories we do not conduct the victor in a chariot preceded by the captives, the modern sculptors are consequently allowed, to make use of such trophies and arms as their fancy directs, in order to imbellish their allegorical arches : for which reason the ornaments of our triumphal arches are most of them suitable to any other building of that kind. But as the triumphal arches of the Romans were erected merely to perpetuate the memory of a real triumph, the ornaments taken from the spoils which had appeared already in a triumph, and were proper for decorating the arch erected on that occasion, were not fit for imbellishing that which they were to erect in memory of another, especially if the victory had been gained over a different people from those, whose overthrow was the occasion of the first triumph and arch. Every body could distinguish there the Dacian, the

Parthian, and the German, in the same manner as the French were known from the Spaniards, about a hundred years ago, when those nations wore each of them their peculiar dress. The triumphal arches of the Romans were therefore historical monuments, that required an historical verity, from whence they could not deviate without acting contrary to the rules of decorum.

Nevertheless, Constantine's arch was embellished with captive Parthians, and trophies composed of their arms and spoils; ornaments all borrowed from Trajan's arch. Trajan had taken these spoils from the Parthians; but Constantine had not as yet been engaged in any quarrel with that nation. In fine, the arch was adorned with Low-relieves, in which all the world might then, and does at present, discover the head of Trajan. Nor can it be said, that it was for the sake of expedition that Trajan's monument was thus sacrificed to Constantine's arch; for as this could not be composed intirely of collected pieces, a sculptor of that time was obliged to make some Low-relieves, in order to fill up the vacant spaces. Such are the Low-relieves which are seen under the principal arch; as also the deities that appear on the outside, placed on the mouldings of the center of the two little arches; and likewise the broken Low-relieves, that are on the key-stones of these arches. All this sculpture, whose parts are distinguished from one another upon approaching the arch, is much inferior to the better kind of Gothic; tho' in all probability the most eminent sculptor of the empire was employed in the execution of it. In fine, when

when Constantine wanted to embellish his new capital, Constantinople, he knew of no better scheme than to transport thither some of the finest monuments of Rome. And yet as sculpture does not depend so much on moral causes as poetry and painting ; and as the physical causes have not the same empire over it as over the other two arts, it ought consequently to have a slower decline than those arts ; nay, even a slower decline than eloquence. Besides, we find by what Petronius says of painting, that this art began to degenerate even so early as the emperor Nero's reign.

To come now to poetry, Lucan was successor to Virgil ; and what a number of steps do we find already, descending from the *Aeneid* to the *Pharsalia* ? Next to Lucan appeared Statius, whose poetry is reckoned much inferior to that of Lucan. Statius, who lived under Domitian, left no successor behind him : neither was Horace succeeded in the lyric kind of writing. Juvenal supported satire under the empire of Adrian, but his poems may be considered as the last gasp of the Roman Muses. Ausonius and Claudian, who attempted to revive the Latin poetry, produced only a phantom that resembled it ; their verses having neither the numbers, nor the force of those that were written under the reign of Augustus. Tacitus, who wrote under Trajan, is the last Roman historian, having no other successor but the abridger of Trogus Pompeius. Tho' the learned seem to be divided with regard to the time when Quintus Curtius wrote his history of Alexander, and tho' he is supposed by some to be a later writer than Tacitus,

it seems to me notwithstanding, to be absolutely decided by a passage of his book, that he wrote about fourscore years before Tacitus. He says ^a, in relation to the misfortunes which ensued after the death of Alexander, when the Macedonians chose several chiefs instead of one: That Rome had like to have been lately ruined by a project of restoring the republic. We distinguish in the magnificent recital he makes of this event, all the principal circumstances of the tumult which happened in Rome, when the senate attempted, after the decease of Caligula, to re-establish the republican government, and when their partisans made head against the prætorian cohorts, who insisted upon having an emperor. Quintus Curtius draws so particular a description of all the circumstances of the accession of Claudius to the empire, which calmed the tumult; he gives such broad hints of Claudius's family, that it is impossible to hesitate with regard to the application of this passage, especially as the narrative cannot be applied to the accession of any of the thirty immediate successors of Claudius. This passage of Quintus Curtius can be understood only with respect to the accession of Claudius or that of Gordianus Pius.

Sixty years after the decease of Augustus, Quin-tilian wrote on the causes of the decay of the Roman eloquence. Longinus, who wrote under Galienus, has given us a chapter *on the causes of the degeneracy of spirits*, at the end of his treatise on the Sublime. There was only the art of oratory left at that time; but the orators themselves had dis-

^a QUINTUS CURTIUS, l. 10. sect. 9.

peared. The decadency of arts and sciences was become already a sensible object ; and had made a sufficient impression on those who were capable of reflecting, to oblige them to enquire into the causes of this decay. This observation had been made a long time before the Barbarians had ravaged Italy.

'Tis observable also, that the arts and sciences began to decline under magnificent emperors, who cultivated the arts themselves. Nero, Adrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Alexander Severus knew how to paint : Can it therefore be supposed that the arts were disregarded during their reigns ? In fine, in the four centuries which elapsed from Julius Cæsar's time to the inundation of the Barbarians, there were successively several peaceable reigns, which may be considered as a real and historical golden age. Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius, who succeeded one another immediately, and whose accession to the empire was as tranquil as that of a son who succeeds his father, were all great and good princes ; and their contiguous reigns compose almost an intire century.

True it is, that several emperors were tyrants ; and that the civil wars, by which a great number of those princes obtained or lost the empire, were very frequent. But the tyrannical humor of Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Commodus, Caracalla, and Maximinus, never discharged itself upon men of letters, and much less upon artists. Lucan, the only man of letters of any note, that was put to death in those times, was condemned for a conspiracy, and not as a poet. Did the death of Lucan discourage those, who were men of genius, from writing verses ?

Statius, Juvenal, Martial, and many others who might have seen him die, were not deterred by his death from writing. The tyrannical spirit of those emperors was levelled principally against the great men of the state. The ambition, which even the cruellest amongst them had of being upon good terms with the people, and which induced them to ingratiate themselves with the populace, by entertaining them with all sorts of feasts and spectacles, engaged them to encourage the advancement of arts and learning.

As for the civil wars, which are so much talked of in history, the scenes of the greatest part of them were out of Italy, and finished in two campaigns. They did not disturb forty years out of three hundred, which are computed from the time of Augustus to that of Gallienus. The civil war of Otho and Vitellius, and that between Vitellius and Vespasian, which did not last both together so long as nine months, could surely be never so great a prejudice to learning and arts, as the civil war between Pompey and Cæsar, as that also of Modena, and the other civil wars which Augustus waged against the murderers of Cæsar, and against Mark Antony. Nevertheless the civil commotions, in which Julius Cæsar and Augustus had a share, were no obstruction to the progress of learning. The death of Domitian was the effect of a plot of his own servants, and the day after his death Nerva entered upon a peaceable reign. Things went pretty near in the same manner at the death of Commodus, and at that of Pertinax, the two first emperors that were killed and deposed after Domitian. Severus dispossessed

seffed Didius Julianus without fighting, and the war he waged in the east against Pescennius Niger, as also that which afterwards broke out in Gaul between him and Clodius Albinus, did not interrupt the studies of the learned, nor the labors of the Roman artists, no more than the sudden revolution that happened in Asia, and which dispossessed Caracalla to make room for Macrinus, and removed the latter to substitute Heliogabalus. 'Tis true, those tumultuous revolutions happened sometimes in Rome, but they generally ended in a day or two, without being attended with those accidents which are apt to retard the progress of arts and sciences.

Nero was deposed at Rome without fighting a blow. The murder of Galba, and Otho's accession to the throne, was a morning's work, and the insurrection cost only the lives of a hundred people. The Romans stood and beheld the engagement between Vespasian's and Vitellius's troops, with as much unconcernedness as if they had been gazing at the combats of the gladiators. Maximinus was deposed, and the Gordians of Afric substituted in his place, with as much ease and tranquillity as if sentence had been executed upon a private person. When the Gordians died in Afric, Puppianus and Balbinus succeeded them without any disturbance, and it was but a two day's war which broke out between the people and the prætorian cohorts; when these two emperors were assassinated, and Gordianus Pius substituted in their stead. The other revolutions were very sudden, and we have already observed that they happened out of Rome. In fine, the civil wars of the Romans, under their first fifty empe-

rors, were only particular disputes between the armies contending which should have the honor of giving a master to the empire. During these broils, the two parties took as much care of their respective provinces, as our Christian princes take, in those wars in which they are but too often engaged, of such territories as they expect to conquer and preserve. There happen on these occasions a great many disorders, but not such as to bury the arts and sciences. 'Tis not every kind of war that obstructs the progress of the arts ; no, 'tis only such as endangers private people's fortunes, such as reduces them from a state of liberty to that of servitude, or deprives them at least of their property.

Such were the wars between the Persians and the Greeks, and such those between the Barbarians of the North and the Roman empire. Such also are the wars between the Turks and Christians, in which the whole body of the people run greater risks, than the soldiers are exposed to in the common course of war. Wars of this sort generally subvert the arts and sciences in those countries which they lay waste ; but regular wars, in which the people are exposed to no other danger but that of changing master, and of belonging to one prince rather than to another, are not a necessary cause of the destruction of the arts and sciences, unless it be in some town so unhappy as to be taken by storm. The terror spread by such wars, can only retard their progress for a few years ; tho' it does not seem to produce even that effect. The arts and sciences (by what fatality I know not) never flourish better than in the midst of these wars. Greece was exposed to a great

many such commotions in the learned age of Philip father of Alexander the Great. It was during the civil wars which tore the Roman empire under Cæsar and Augustus, that the arts and sciences made such a surprizing progress at Rome. From the year 1494 to 1529, Italy was continually harassed by armies consisting for the greatest part of foreign soldiers. The Spanish Netherlands were attacked by France and Holland at the time the school of Antwerp flourished: and was it not in war time that the arts and sciences made their greatest progress in France ?

It does not therefore appear, upon mature inquiry, that during the three ages which followed the murder of Cæsar, the Roman empire was exposed to any of those frightful wars, which are capable of throwing the arts and sciences into a state of decay. The Barbarians did not commence to have any fixt settlements in the empire, nor the petty tyrants to rise up in particular provinces, till towards the reign of Gallienus. Those governors who made themselves sovereigns, might have occasioned the devastation of some countries, by the wars they waged with one another in such provinces, as had no fortresses on their frontiers by reason of their having been a long time subject to the same master : Yet these devastations could never be the cause of that great decay of the arts and sciences. The capital of a state is always the seat of arts in a connected government ; wherefore we may reasonably suppose, that the able artists of the Roman empire were always to be met with at Rome. The devastations therefore of this city only can be alledged as one of the causes of the decline of the arts and sciences.

ences. Now Rome was the capital of a great empire, and continued to be embellished with new edifices, till it was taken by Alaricus, an event which did not happen till four hundred and fifty years after the death of Cæsar. The tumults of the Praetorian Cohorts could be no obstruction to her having great painters, sculptors, orators, and poets, since they were no hindrance to an infinite multitude of indifferent artists. When the arts are cultivated enough to form a great number of indifferent artists, they might form excellent ones, were not the workmen destitute of genius.

Rome is to this very day full of tombs and statues, which by their inscriptions and the women's head-dresfs, are easily distinguished to have been made from the reign of Trajan to that of Constantine. As the Roman ladies used to change their head-dress as often as the French ladies do theirs, the make of those head-dresses which are found in the Roman monuments, soon inform us under what emperor they were made; as we know by the medals of the wives and relations of the emperors, at what time a particular fashion prevailed. 'Tis thus one may judge of the time in which the figure of a French lady in a town dress was made, by the help of a collection of the several modes which have obtained in France within these three hundred years, such as that published by Monsieur de Gaignieres.

Authors of the fourth century take notice, that there were more statues at Rome than inhabitants; and the finest statues, whose remains we prize so much to this day, were of this number. From Caracalla's

la's time these statues were never able to form any good sculptors : Their efficacy and influence remained suspended till the time of Pope Julius II. And yet the people of Rome continued even in Constantine's time to raise most magnificent buildings, and consequently to employ great numbers of sculptors. Artists of all kinds were never more numerous at Rome, than when they were least skilful in their profession. How many sumptuous buildings were erected by Severus, Caracalla, Alexander Severus, and Gordianus Pius ? One cannot behold the ruins of Caracalla's hot baths, without being astonished at the immense bulk of this edifice : even Augustus himself never built one of so great a size. There never was a more sumptuous fabric, more loaded with ornaments and incrustations, or which did a greater honor by its bulk to a sovereign, than the hot baths of Dioclesian, one of Gallienus's successors. The hall of this edifice is now the Carthusian church at Rome ; and one of the porters lodges makes another church, that of the begging friars of St Bernard at Termini.

Let us add one remark to these considerations. The greatest part of the Roman sculptors made their apprenticeship in the condition of slaves ; we may therefore suppose, that merchants who dealt in slaves, were very careful in examining, whether amongst the children they brought up for sale, there were not some who had a particular talent for sculpture. 'Tis probable also, that when they found them capable of excelling in this art, they were very diligent in giving them a proper education for improving their abilities. If a slave turned out a good artist,

artist, he proved a treasure to his master, whether he had a mind to sell his person or his works. Now the methods which may be employed to oblige a young slave to apply himself to business, are much more effectual than those which are used to engage free-born people. Besides, what a powerful incentive was it for slaves, to be flattered with the hopes of liberty ! Those master-pieces whose vestiges we so much admire, were still in all public places ; wherefore we can impute to moral causes the ignorance of those artists only, who did not appear till after Rome was taken and plundered by Alaricus.

Whence comes it, that the arts and sciences did not support themselves in Greece in that high degree of credit, to which they had been raised under the father of Alexander, and the successors of this conqueror ? Whence comes it, that they continued always to decline, insomuch that the Greek artists were grown as rude and ignorant under Constantine, as they were two hundred years before Philip. Arts and learning fell into a sensible decay in Greece from the time of Perseus king of Macedon, who was defeated and made prisoner by Paulus Æmilius. Painting did not support itself so long, but began to degenerate, as Quintilian observes ^a, as early as the first successors of Alexander. Lucian may pass for the only poet that appeared after that time, tho' he wrote in prose. Plutarch, and Dion Cassius, who is nearer to the latter's time than merit, are

^a *Floruit autem circa Philippum & usque ad successores Alexandri præcipue pictura.* QUINT. Inst. l. 11. c. 10.

esteemed the best authors that wrote since Greece was become a province of the Roman empire. The writings of those two Greeks deserve our respect and veneration, being the works of judicious historians, who have transmitted to us in a very sensible manner, several curious and important facts, which we have only from their relations. Plutarch's books especially are the most precious remains we have of Greek and Roman antiquity, in respect to the details and facts, with which he acquaints us. The same pretty near may be said of Dion and Herodian, who wrote under Alexander Severus and Gordianus Pius; yet these historians are no way to be compared for strength and dignity, or for the art of painting great events, to Herodotus and Thucydides. We have already mentioned the use which may be made of medals, to know the condition the arts were in at the time they were struck. Now the medals which were struck in vast numbers with the emperors heads in those provinces of the Roman empire, in which the Greek language obtained, are very ill engraved in comparison to such as were made at Rome at the same time by the authority of those senate, whose mark they bore. For example, those of Severus struck at Corfù, which are become now very common by means of the discovery of a treasure in that island about sixty years ago, are vastly inferior to the Latin medals of this same emperor, which were struck at Rome: Nevertheless the Corfù medals are engraved the very best of any that were struck in Greece. Thus our general rule scarce admits of any exception.

Greece notwithstanding, from the death of Alexander till its subjection to the Romans, was exposed to none of those calamitous wars, which are capable of throwing the arts and sciences into oblivion. The tumult occasioned by the irruption of the Gauls into Greece about a hundred years after the death of Alexander, was of no long continuance. But were we even to grant, that the arts and sciences suffered by the wars which broke out between the successors of Alexander, and by those which the Romans carried on against two kings of Macedon and the Ætolians ; they ought nevertheless to have reverted again to their former state of perfection, as soon as the tranquillity of Greece was restored and settled by its submission to the Romans. The application and study of artists was no more interrupted after that period, but by the Mithridatic war and the civil wars of the Romans, which gave some little disturbance for four or five years to different provinces. At the very latest, the arts and sciences ought to have raised their heads under the reign of Augustus, who made them flourish at Rome. After the battle of Actium Greece enjoyed for the space of three hundred years, its serenest days. Under the greatest part of the Roman emperors, the subjection of Greece to the empire was rather a kind of fee-dependance, which secured the public tranquillity, than a servitude burthensome to particulars, and prejudicial to society. The Romans had not a standing army in Greece, as in other provinces ; the most part of the cities were governed by their ancient laws, and generally speaking, of all foreign sovereignties never was there one which was less oppressive to conquered nations, than that

that of the Romans. Their government had more of the nature of a rudder than of a yoke. Finally, the wars which the Athenians, Thebans, and Lacedemonians waged against one another; those likewise of Philip with the rest of the Greeks, were much more dreadful for their duration and events, than the wars which Alexander, his successors, and the Romans carried on in Greece. Yet the former wars did not debar the arts and sciences from making that surprizing progress, which reflects to this very day so much honor on human understanding.

What has been hitherto alledged (some will say) does not prove that the Greeks had not under the Antoninus's and their successors as much genius as Phidias and Praxiteles; but their artists were degenerated, because the Romans had transported the master-pieces of the most eminent artists to Rome, and consequently had stript Greece of such objects as were most proper to form the taste and excite the emulation of young workmen. It was during the second Punic war that Marcellus ³ remov'd to Rome the spoils of the porticos of Siracuse, from whence the Roman citizens imbibed a relish for the arts, which soon became the general taste of Rome, and was afterwards the cause of so many depredations. Even those who were ignorant of the value and merit of statues, vases, and other curiosities, seized notwithstanding on every occasion of carrying them to Rome, where they saw them so highly valued. 'Tis plain that Mummius, who intended to enrich Rome with the spoils of Corinth, understood nothing at all of their value, by the ridiculous

menace he made to the masters of the vessels, who were charged with this magnificent freight ^a. Never could there have been a loss more difficult to repair than that of this precious depositum, consisting of so many master-pieces of those illustrious artists, who contribute as much as the greatest generals to transmit the glory of their age to posterity. Nevertheless, Mummius recommending this treasure to their care, threatened them very seriously, that if they should chance to lose the statues, pictures, and other things with which he intrusted them, he would be sure to have others of equal value made at their expence. But the Romans (to go on with the objection) soon emerged from this ignorance, and even the common soldier learnt to avoid breaking the precious vases, when plundering the enemies towns. Sylla's army brought the Greek taste for the polite arts from Asia to Rome, or to speak more correctly, they rendered it common in that city. *Then it was*, says Sallust ^b, *that the Roman soldiers first learnt to wench, to drink, to admire statues, pictures, and embossed vessels; then to get at them by stealth or open violence, and to rob the temples of the Gods; polluting every thing they could lay hold of either sacred or profane.*

As early as the time of the republic there had been more Verres's than one, and more than one Roman who had exercised a right of conquest over

^a VELL. PATERC. I. 2.

^b *Ibi primum inservit exercitus populi Romani amare, potare, signaque, tabulas pietas, wasa cælata mirari, ea privatim ac publicè rapere, delubra spoliare, sacra profanaque omnia polluere.* SALLUST.
de Bell. CATILIN.

the subjected provinces. What a melancholy description of these excesses do we meet with in Cicero's fourth oration against this plunderer! This licentiousness, far from ending with the republican government, became a most lawless and unbridled rapaciousness under several emperors. The impudence with which Caligula plundered the provinces, is most notorious. Nero sent Carinas and Acratus, two *connoisseurs*, into Greece and Asia, to pick up all the fine pieces of sculpture that were remaining in those countries, in order to embellish his new buildings. The poor Greeks, as Juvenal observes, were stript even of their household Gods : They did not so much as leave them the least diminutive God that was worth removing.

*Ipsi deinde lares, si quod spectabile signum,
Si quis in edicula, Deus unicus.* Juv. sat. 8.
*Their rapine is so abject and profane,
They not from trifles, nor from Gods refrain ;
But the poor Lares from the niches seize,
If they be little images that please.* STEPNEY.

All these facts are true, yet there was still such a great number of fine pieces of sculpture remaining in Greece and Asia, that it was impossible for the artists to be in want of models : There were objects enough left that were capable of exciting their emulation. The excellent statues which have been found in Greece within these two or three centuries, are a sufficient proof that the Roman emperors and their officers had not stript the country. The Ganymedes which is to be seen in the library of St Mark at Venice, was found

in Greece about three hundred years ago. The Andromeda belonging to the duke of Modena, was discovered at Athens, when this town was plundered by the Venetians during the war, that was terminated by the peace of Carlowitz. The relations of travellers abound with descriptions of statues and Low-relieves, which are still to be seen in Greece and Asia Minor. Did the Romans take away the Low-relieves from the temple of Minerva at Athens? But to come to letters, did they strip the Greeks of all the copies of Homer, Sophocles, and other writers of the best note? No; but these happy days were past. The industry of the Greeks was degenerated into a kind of artifice, and their penetration and sagacity into a low spirit of cunning. Thus they were grown very coarse and ignorant, except in the art of prejudicing one another. During the last six centuries of the empire of Constantinople, they were less dextrous and knowing, especially in the arts, than they had been in the time of Amyntas king of Macedon. 'Tis true, that the happy age of Greece lasted longer than the Augustan age, or that of Leo X. Learning maintained itself there after the decay of the polite arts, because, generally speaking, the Greeks in all ages have been superior in wit and capacity to other nations. One would imagine, that nature has received a particular vigor and strength in Greece, which she has not in other countries; so as to communicate more substance to nourishments, and more malignity to poison. The Greeks, in fact, have carried their vices and virtues to a much higher point than any other nation.

The

The city of Antwerp was for a certain time the Athens of the countries on this side the Alps. And yet when Rubens began to raise the credit of his school, the moral causes did not seem then to exert themselves in favor of his art. If the flourishing state of cities and kingdoms were the sole cause of the perfection of the polite arts, painting should have been sixty years sooner in its highest splendor. When Rubens first appeared, Antwerp had lost one half of its grandeur, since the new republic of Holland had ingrossed the greatest part of its commerce. The adjacent country was actually the seat of war, and a neighbouring enemy was every day making some new attempts against that city, by which the estates of the merchants, clergy, and all the principal inhabitants, were continually exposed to the most imminent dangers. Rubens left eleves such as Jordans and Vandyke, who were indeed a credit to their master, but left no disciples behind them to inherit their reputation. The school of Rubens has had the same fate as other schools, I mean that it dropt when every thing seemed to concur to support it. It seems as if Quellins, who may be looked upon as her last painter, were likely to dye without leaving any eleves worthy of his name. We have heard of none as yet, and there is no likelihood he will acquire any pupils in his present retirement.

From what has been hitherto alledged, 'tis evident that the arts and sciences attain to the highest point of their splendor, by a sudden progress which cannot be attributed to moral causes; and 'tis also

plain that they decline, when these same moral causes exert themselves as much as possible to support them.

Third REFLECTION.

That eminent painters have been always contemporaries with the great poets of their own country.

IN fine the eminent artists of every country have been generally contemporaries. The great painters of the several schools have not only lived at the same time, but have been likewise contemporaries with the most famous poets of their own country. The ages in which the arts flourished, have been also fertile of men eminent in all sciences, virtues, and professions. There seems to be a peculiar time, in which a certain spirit of perfection sheds itself on the inhabitants of a particular country. This same spirit seems to withdraw itself after having rendered two or three generations perfecter than the preceding or following ones.

When Greece produced an Apelles, her fecundity gave us at the same time a Praxiteles and a Lysippus. Then it was, that her greatest poets, her most eminent orators and philosophers flourished. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Isocrates, Thucydides, Xenophon, Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Menander, and several others, lived all in the same age. What eminent men appeared among the Greek generals of that time! What famous exploits did not they perform with small armies! What great princes were not Philip, king of Macedon

Macedon and his son! Were we to collect all the illustrious men that Greece has produced from the time of Perseus king of Macedon down to the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, we shall not find in those seventeen centuries such a swarm of men eminent in all professions, as appeared in the age of Plato. All other professions degenerated in Greece together with the polite arts. Livy calls Philopomenus, one of the prætors of the Achaians during the reign of Perseus king of Macedon, the last of the Greeks.

The Augustan age had the same fate as that of Plato. Among the monuments of Roman sculpture we meet with nothing more exquisite than those pieces which were made in the reign of Augustus. Such as the bust of Agrippa his son-in-law, which is to be seen in the gallery of the great duke of Tuscany; the Cicero of the Villa Matthei; as also the chapters of the columns of Julius Cæsar's temple, which are yet standing in the middle of the *Campo Vaccino*, and which all the sculptors of Europe have agreed to take for models, when they treat of the Corinthian order. It was under Augustus that the Roman medals began to grow fine; and engraving is an art which generally follows the fate of sculpture. We distinguish the times in which a great many engraved stones were done, by the subjects and heads which they represent. The finest Roman stones are such as we know were engraved in Augustus's time. Such is the Cicero on an agate which belonged to Charles II king of England, and the stone in the king's cabinet representing Augustus and Livia. Such is the stone which was given to the late king by M. Fesch

of Basil, where we see an Apollo on a rock playing on his lyre. This is the attitude which characterises the *Apollo Aetiacus* in the medals of Augustus, under whom this new divinity first appeared, after he had gained the battle of Actium. We have likewise another reason to believe that these medals were engraved in Augustus's reign : 'Tis the name of the engravers which we read where the name of the artists are sometimes engraved in this kind of work. Now Pliny ^a and others inform us, that those excellent engravers in stone, lived under this emperor. We may also mention here the agate in *relievo*, which is to be seen in the emperor's cabinet at Vienna, and represents Augustus and Livia; as likewise that whose design we have had from father Montfaucon in his travels thro' Italy ^b, which represents Mark Antony and Cleopatra. In fine, the most valuable of all the antique stones, the agate of the holy chapel at Paris, whose explication has employed the erudition of five of the most illustrious antiquarians, was engraved under Augustus or his two immediate successors. This is a point that Peiresc, Tristan, Albert Rubens, M. le Roi, and father Hardouin are agreed upon.

We may affirm the same of the Roman architecture, as has been now said of sculpture. The theatre of Marcellus, the portico and inward decorations of the Rotonda, the temple of Julius Cæsar in the *Campo Vaccino*, that of Jupiter Anxur at Terracina, (which we know to be the work of the architect Pollio ^c by an inscription engraved on one of

^a PLIN. hist. l. 37.

^b Pag. 242.

^c Probably this was Vitruvius, whose name was *Vitruvius Pollio*, and who lived under Augustus;

the marble pieces of the great wall;) and the temple of Castor and Pollux, built at Naples at the expence of a freed-man of Augustus, are esteemed the noblest monuments of the Roman magnificence and the most valuable for their architecture.

Every body knows, that the greatest Roman poets, or to speak more justly, all the great Latin poets, except two or three, flourished in the age of Augustus. This prince saw, or at least might have seen, Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Catullus, Tibullus, Ovid, Phædrus, Cornelius Gallus, and several others whose works have perished, tho' they were admired as much in their days, as we admire those that are extant. He might have seen Lucretius, who died in the year of Rome 699, the very day that Virgil put on the *toga virilis*, or manly gown, as Donatus observes in the life of Virgil. Mr. Creech, ³ the last and best commentator of Lucretius, is mistaken in the life he has given us of this author, by making him dye the same day that Virgil was born. Hear what Horace says of the merit of Fundanius, Pollio, and Varius, three other cotemporaries of Augustus.

*Arguta meretrice potes, Davoque Chremeta
Eludente senem, comeis garrire libellos,
Unus vivorum, Fundani. Pollio regum.
Facta canit, pede ter percusso: forte epos acer,
Ut nemo, Varius dicit: molle atque facetum
Virgilio annuerunt gaudentes rure Camæne.*

HOR. serm. I. i. sat. 10.

³ His book was printed at Oxford in 1695.

*True comedy Fundanius only writes,
Pollio the acts of kings, and noble fights:
Strong epic poems Varius best can raise,
And Virgil's happy muse in eclogues plays,
Natural, and soft, and justly wins the bays.*

C R E E C H .

'Tis a vast prejudice in favor of these poets, that so judicious a writer as Horace, ranks them in the same class with Virgil.

The greatest part of the above-mentioned poets might have seen Cicero, Hortensius, and the rest of the most celebrated Roman orators. They must have seen Julius Cæsar as remarkable, when a citizen, for his eloquence and several other civil virtues, as famous, when a general, for his exploits and knowledge in the art of war. Livy the prince of the Roman historians, Sallust an historian whom Paterculus and Quintilian^a dare compare to Thucydides, flourished under Augustus. They were likewise contemporaries with Vitruvius the most illustrious of the Roman architects. Augustus was born before the death of Æsopus and Roscius the most eminent comedians mentioned in the Roman history. What surprizing men were Cato Uticensis, Brutus, and the most part of the murderers of Cæsar! What a great man must Agrippa have been, who made so prodigious a fortune under a prince so good a judge of merit as Augustus? As Seneca the father observes,^b *the most eminent orators that the Roman elo-*

^a VELL. PAT. 1. 2. QUINT. Inst. 1. 10. cap. 1.

^b *Quidquid Romana facundia habet, quod insolenti Græciae aut opponat aut præferat, circa Ciceronem effloruit. Omnia ingenia que lucem studiis nostris attulerunt tunc nata sunt. In deterius deinde quotidie data res est.* M. ANN. SENEC. Controv. 1. 1.

quence had to compare or prefer to proud Greece, flourished about Cicero's time. Then it was that those great wits appeared, who illustrated the several branches of the Roman learning, which from that period has been continually on the decline.

The pontificates of Julius II, Leo X, and Clement VII, so extremely fertile of great painters, produced also the best architects and the greatest sculptors that Italy can boast of. At the same time there appeared excellent engravers in all those branches which this art includes. The rising art of prints was improved in their hands, upon its first appearance, as much as painting was perfected in the pictures of Raphael. Every one is acquainted with the fame and merit of Ariosto and Tasso, who lived at least in the same age.

Fracastorius, Sannazarius, and Vida, composed the best Latin verses at that time, that had been wrote since the recovery of letters. What great men, each of them in their kind, were Leo X, Paul III, the cardinals Bembo and Sadoletus, Andrew Doria, the marquis of Pescara, Philip Strozzi, Cosmus of Medicis stiled the Great, Machiavel, and Guicciardin the historian? But in proportion as the arts have continued to decline, the places and professions of those great men have ceased to be filled with persons of their merit.

The most eminent French sculptors, Sarazin, les Anguiers, Hongre, les Marcy, Gyrardon, Dezjardins, Coizevox, Le Gros, Theodon, Puget, and several others who are still living, flourished under the reign of the late king, as also Poussin, Le Sueur, Le Brun, Coypel, Jouvenet, Les Bolognes, Forest, Rigault, and others who reflect so great an honor on our

our nation. Was it not under his reign that the Mansards distinguished themselves by their works? Then it was, that Vermeule, Mellan, Edelink, Simonneau, Nanteuil, les Poilly, Masson, Piteau, Van-Schuppen, Mademoiselle Stella, Gerard Audran, Le Clerc, Picard, and so many other engravers, some of whom are still living, excelled in all sorts of engraving. We have had several goldsmiths and engravers of medals at that time, such as Varin, who deserve that their reputation should be as durable as that of Dioscorides and Alcimedon. Sarrazin, the Corneilles, Moliere, Racine, La Fontaine, Boileau, Quinault, and Chapelle, were all successively the contemporaries of these worthies. They lived at the same time with *Le Notre*, a person famous for having perfected, and even created in some measure the art of gardening, which obtains at present in the greatest part of Europe. Lulli, who came into France so very young, that he may be considered as a Frenchman, tho' he was born in Italy, excelled to such a degree in music, that most countries have been jealous of his reputation. In his days there were several very eminent in the art of playing on all kinds of instruments.

All the various branches of eloquence and learning were cultivated under the reign of the late king by persons, who may be cited as models to such as in future times will apply themselves to the same kinds of study. Petau, Sirmond, Du Cange, Launoi, Monsieur de Valois, Du Chesne, Herbelot, Vaillant, Rapin, Commire, Mabillon, D'Acheri, Thomassin, Arnaud, Pascal, Nicole, Bossu, Monsieur Le Maitre, Rochefoucault, Cardinal

Cardinal Retz, Bochard, Saumaise, Malbranche, Monsieur Claude, Descartes, Gassendi, Rohault, Abbot Regnier, Patru, Huetius, Monsieur de la Bruyere, Flechier, Fenelon, Boffuet, Bourdaloue, Mascaron, Desmares, Vaugelas, Ablancourt, Abbot St Real, Pelisson, Monsieur Regis, Perrault, and so many others, have lived in an age which produced so many master-pieces in poetry, painting, and sculpture, as will perpetuate the glory of this age to posterity.

In those two generations which furnished France with the illustrious list of the learned above-mentioned, we find a vast number of men eminent in all kinds of professions. How many excellent magistrates has this age, so fertile in geniuses, produced ? The name of the great Condé and that of marshal Turenne, will be an appellation used for characterising a great general, as long as the French nation subsists. What a great man would marshal Guebriant have been, had not an untimely death snatched him away in the vigor of his age ? All the talents requisite in the military art have been displayed by persons of most singular merit. Marshal Vauban is considered not only by our French officers, but by all the military gentlemen of Europe, as the greatest of engineers. What reputation have not some of the late king's ministers at this very time in Europe ? Let us wish for successors to those worthies who are deceased without having been yet replaced ; and that the Raphaels, who are yet living, in whatsoever kind of profession, may leave us their Julio Romano's to console us for their loss.

Velleius Paterculus, who wrote his history towards the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, examining into the fate of the illustrious ages that had preceded him, makes the same reflections as I have now made on those very ages, and the other illustrious times which have succeeded that historian. Hear how he explains himself at the end of his last book^a. *I cannot help committing to writing the ideas which rise in my mind, without being capable to throw them into the form of a clear and continued system. Is it not a surprizing thing to observe, when we reflect on the events of past ages, that the personages eminent in all kinds of professions have been always contemporaries, that they have flourished always in the same period which has been of a very short continuance. In a few years Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides carried tragedy to its highest pitch of perfection? Aristophanes, Eupolis, and Cratinus, established in a very short space of time, the spectacle which we call the ancient comedy. Menander, with Philemon and Diphilus his contemporaries, if not his equals, perfected in a few years, what goes under the name*

^a Cum hæc particula operis velut formam propositi excessit, quamquam intelligo, mihi in hac tam præcipiti festinatione, quæ me rotæ pronive gurgitis ac verticis modo nusquam patitur consistere, pæne magis necessaria prætereunda, quam supervacua amplectenda: nequeo tamen temperare mihi, quin rem sæpe agitatam animo meo, neque ad liquidum ratione perductam, signem stilo. Quis enim abunde mirari potest, eminentissima cujusque professionis ingenia, in eandem formam, & in idem artati temporis congruens spatium; & quemadmodum clausa capsa, alioque septo diversi generis animalia, nibilo minus separata alienis, in unum quæque corpus congregantur, ita cujusque clari operis capacia ingenia in similitudinem & temporum & prosec-

name of the new comedy. They were inventors of a new kind of poetry, and left pieces behind them that were inimitable. The illustrious philosophers of the school of Socrates expired with his disciples Plato and Aristotle. 'Tis observable also that they lived at the same time as the great poets above-mentioned. Have there been any great orators since Isocrates? Have there been any heard of since his disciples, or at least since the eleves of his disciples? The age which produced those great men was so short, that they might all have been acquainted with one another.

The same thing which happened in Greece, is come to pass at Rome. If you ascend higher than Accius and his cotemporaries, you will meet with nothing but rusticity and coarseness in the Latin tragedy. The predecessors of this author can be commended only for one thing; which is, their having first broke the ice. The true wit and pleasantry of the comic stage appears only

in

tuum semetipsa ab aliis separaverunt? Una, neque multorum annorum spatio divisa, actas, per divini spiritus viros, Æschylum, Sophoclem, Euripidem, illustravit tragædias: Una priscam illam & veterem sub Cratino, Aristophane, & Eupolide Comædiam; ac novam comicam Menandrus, æqualesque ejus ætatis magis quam operis, Philemon ac Diphilus, & invenere intra paucissimos annos, neque imitanda reliquere. Philosophorum quoque ingenia, Socratico ore defluentia, omnium, quos paullo ante enumeravimus, quanto post Platonis Aristotelisque mortem floruerent spatio? Quid ante Isocratem, quid post ejus auditores, eorumque discipulos, clarum in oratoribus fuit? Adeo quidem artatum angustiis temporum, ut nemo memoria dignus, alter ab altero videri nequiverint. Neque hoc in Græcis quam in Romanis evenit magis. Nam nisi aspera ac rudia repetas, & inventi laudanda nomine, in Accio circaque eum Romana tragædia est; dulcesque Latini leporis facetiæ per Cæcilium, Terentiumque, & Afranius sub pari ætate nituerunt. Historicos (ut & Livium quoque

in the pieces of Afranius, Cæcilius, and Terence, three cotemporary writers. We find in the space of four score years, all the Roman historians of note, and even T. Livy. Among the historians of the preceding ages we meet only with such authors as Cato, that is, obscure and coarse annalists. The time so fertile of good poets has not lasted much longer than that which has abounded in good historians. The art of oratory and the Roman eloquence, and in short the perfection of the Latin prose, is visible in Cicero only and his cotemporaries. Amongst the orators that have succeeded him, we find very few that have left us any performances that are capable of pleasing ; and not one of them has wrote any thing that deserves our admiration. At the most we might make some exception in favor of Cato. But you will excuse me, you Publius Crassus, Publius Scipio, Lælius, Fannius, Sergius Galba, and both you Gracchi, if I cannot except you from the general law.

Those quoque priorum ætati adstruas) præter Catonem, & quosdam veteres & obscuros minus LXXX. annis circumdatum ævum tulit ; ut nec poetarum in antiquius citeriusque processit ubertas. At oratio, aevis forensis, perfectumque profæ eloquentiae decus, ut idem separatur Cato (pace P. Crassi Scipionisque & Lælii & Gracchorum, & Fannii & Ser. Galbae dixerim) ita universa sub principe operis sui erupit Tullio, ut delectari ante eum paucissimis, mirari vero neminem possis, nisi aut ab illo visum, aut qui illum viderit. Hoc idem evanisse grammaticis, plastis, pictoribus, sculptoribus, quisquis temporum institerit notis, reperiet ; & eminentia cujusque operis artissimis temporum claustris circumdata. Hujus ergo præcedentisque seculi ingeniorum similitudines congregantis & in studium par, & in emolumentum, causas cum semper requiro, nunquam reperio, quas esse veras confidam, sed fortasse veri similes ; inter quas has maxime. Alit amulatio ingenia ; & nunc invidia, nunc admiratio incitationem accedit & naturaque, quod summo studio petitum est, adscendit in summum :

diffici-

Those who will reflect seriously on the times, in which the famous grammarians, painters, statuaries, and sculptors have lived, will find that they were contemporaries with the most eminent poets, historians, and orators of their country, and that the appellation of illustrious has been always confined to a small number of years. When I happen therefore to compare our age to the preceding ones, and to reflect how vainly we attempt to imitate our predecessors who were only men like ourselves, I cannot account for the sensible difference we observe between their productions and ours, by reasons that afford me any satisfaction.

Paterculus's sentiment carries so much the more weight with it here, as his cotemporaries had in their hands, when he wrote, a vast number of works which have since perished. As the greatest part of them therefore are no longer extant, we cannot decide this dispute at present so well as it difficultaque in perfecto mora est; naturaliterque, quod procedere non potest, recedit. Et, ut primo ad consequendos, quos priores ducimus, accendimur, ita ubi aut præteriri aut æquari eos posse desperavimus, studium cum spe senescit; & quod adsequi non potest, sequi definit, & velut occupatam relinquens materiam, quaerit novam: præteritoque eo, in quo eminere non possumus, aliquid in quo nitamus conquirimus: sequiturque, ut frequens ac mobilis transitus maximum perfecti operis impedimentum sit. Transfit admiratio ad conditionem temporum, & urbium. Una urbs Attica pluribus annis eloquentia, quam universa Græcia, uberiorisque floruit; adeo ut corpora gentis illius separata sint in alias civitates, ingenia vero solis Atheniensem muris clausa existimes. Neque Ego hoc magis miratus sim, quam neminem Argivum, Thebanum, Lacedæmonium oratorem, aut dum vixit auctoritate, aut post mortem memoria dignum existimatum. Quæ urbes, & multæ aliæ, talium studiorum fuere steriles, ni Thebas unum os Pindari illuminaret; nam Alcmana Lacones falso sibi vindicant. VELEIUS PATERCULUS, lib. i. hist. in fine.

could have been determined at that time. Besides, the experience of what has passed since Paterculus, adds a new strength to his reflections : We have shewn, that the fate of the age of Leo X has been the same as that of the ages of Plato and Augustus.

C H A P. XIV.

How it is possible for physical causes to influence the fate of illustrious ages. Of the power of air over human bodies.

IN order to give an explication of the propositions above advanced, and proved by undoubted facts, may we not venture to affirm that there are countries, in which men are not born with the dispositions requisite for excelling in certain professions, as there are soils where particular plants cannot grow ? May we not afterwards maintain, that as the grains which are sown, and the trees that are come to their full growth, do not bear fruit every year of an equal perfection even in the most fertile and propereſt foil, so children educated in the happiest climates, do not in all ages turn out men of like abilities ? Cannot some years prove more favorable than others to the physical education of children, as there are some more favorable than others to the vegetation of trees and plants ? In effect, the human machine is not much less dependent on the qualities of the air, on the changes to which these qualities are liable, and, in short, on all the varia-

tions which may obstruct or favor what we call the operations of nature, than the very fruits themselves."

As two grains from the same plant, produce a fruit of a different quality when they are sown in different soils, or even when they are sown in the same soil but in different years ; so two children born with their brains formed exactly in the same manner, will differ, when they grow up to the state of manhood, in sense and inclinations, if one of them be bred in Sweden, and the other in Andalusia. They will even differ in these respects, though brought up in the same country, if the seasons of their earliest stage of life differ considerably in temperature.

During the life of man, and as long as the soul continues united to the body, the character of our minds and inclinations depends very much on the quality of our blood, which nourishes our organs, and furnishes them with matter of accretion during infancy and youth. Now the quality of our blood depends vastly on the air we breathe ; as also on the air in which we have been bred, by reason of its having decided the quality of our blood during our infancy. The same air contributes in our younger days to the conformation of our organs, which by a necessary concatenation, contributes afterwards in the state of manhood to the quality of our blood. Hence it comes, that people who dwell in different climates, differ so much in spirit and inclinations.

But the very quality of the air depends on that of the emanations of the earth ; and according to the composition of the earth, the air that incloses it, is different. Now the eman-

tions of the earth, which is a mixt body subject to continual fermentations, can never be exactly of the same nature in a particular country : And yet these emanations cannot vary without changing the temperature of the air, and making some alteration in its quality. There must be therefore, in consequence of this vicissitude, some changes now and then in the spirit and humor of the people of a particular country, since there must be ages more favorable than others to the physical education of children. Wherefore some generations will be more sensible and livelier in France than others ; and this from a cause of the same nature as that which renders men more sensible and acute in some countries than others. This difference between two generations of the inhabitants of the same country, will happen thro' the influence of that very cause, from whence the different temperature of years, and the inequality of fruits of different harvests, are known to proceed.

Let us discuss the reasons that may be alledged in support of this paradox, after desiring the reader to make a great difference between the facts above related, and the elucidations I shall attempt to give of those facts. In case my physical explications happen not to prove solid, my error in this point will not hinder the facts from being true, or from proving that the moral causes alone do not determine the fate of the arts and sciences. The effect will not be less certain, for my having given a wrong explication of the cause.

The air we breathe, communicates to the blood in our lungs the qualities with which it is impregnated.

nated. It deposes also on the surface of the earth the matter which contributes most to its fecundity, and the care generally taken to dig and manure it, proceeds from the experience people have, that the earth is much more fertile, when a great number of its particles have imbibed this aerial matter. Men eat one part of the fruits of the earth, and abandon the other to beasts, whose flesh they afterwards convert into their own substance. The quality of the air is communicated also to the waters of fountains and rivers by means of snows and rains, which are impregnated with a part of the corpuscles suspended in the air.

Now the air, which certainly has a great power over our machine, is a mixt body composed of elementary air and of the emanations which escape from the bodies it pervades, or which its continual action may chance to set loose. Naturalists prove also that the air is likewise filled with an infinite number of small animals and their seeds. This is sufficient to make us easily conceive, that it is subject to an infinite number of alterations resulting from the mixture of corpuscles in its composition, which corpuscles can neither be always the same, nor always in the same quantity. Hence 'tis also easy to apprehend, that among the different alterations to which the air is successively exposed, some must last longer than others, and some must favor more than others the productions of nature.

The air is also exposed to several vicissitudes proceeding from external causes, such as the action of the sun diversified by its elevation, proximity, and exposition, and also by the nature of the soil, on

which its beams are reflected. The same may be said of the action of the wind, which blows from adjacent countries. These causes, which I call external, render the air subject to vicissitudes of cold and heat, drought and humidity. Sometimes the alterations of the air produce these vicissitudes, as it happens also that these vicissitudes are the cause of some alterations. But this discussion does not essentially belong to my subject, which we cannot disintangle too much from such things as are not absolutely necessary for clearing it up.

Nothing is more proper for conveying a just idea of the influence which the qualities peculiar to the air of a certain country by virtue of its composition, and which we may call permanent qualities, have over men and especially children, than to recall to mind the knowledge we have of the power which the simple vicissitudes, or transient alterations of the air have even over those, whose organs have acquired their full consistence. The quality of the air resulting from its composition, is much more durable than these vicissitudes.

Nevertheless the humor, and even the spirit and inclinations of adult people, depend very much on the vicissitudes of the air. According as this is dry or moist, according as it is hot, cold, or temperate, we are mechanically merry or sad, and pleased or vexed without any particular motive: In fine, we experience a facility or difficulty of turning and applying our minds to what objects we please. If these vicissitudes proceed so far, as to cause an alteration in the air, their effect must be still more sensible. The fermentation which prepares a storm, operates

rates not only on our minds, insomuch as to render us heavy, and debar us from thinking with our wonted liberty of imagination ; but moreover it corrupts even our provisions. It is sufficient to alter the state of a distemper or a wound for the worse ; and is frequently mortal to such as have been cut for the stone.

The poet Vida had frequently experienced those critical moments, in which the work of the imagination grows disagreeable ; and he attributes it to the action of the air on our machine. In fact, our minds may be said to indicate the present state of the air with an exactness almost equal to that of Barometers and Thermometers.

*Nam variant species animorum, & pectora nostra
Nunc huc, nunc illos, multo discrimine, motus
Concipiunt : seu quod cœli mutatur in horas
Tempestas, hominumque simul quoque pectora mutant.*

VIDA poet. l. 2.

*For ev'n the soul not always holds the same,
But knows at diff'rent times a diff'rent frame.
Whether with rolling seasons she complies,
Turns with the sun, or changes with the skies.*

PITT.

We observe even in animals the different effects of the action of the air. According as it is serene or troubled, brisk or heavy, it inspires beasts with vivacity, or throws them into a heaviness which a very small attention can render perceptible.

*Vertuntur species animorum, & pectora motus
Nunc alios, alios dum nabila ventus agebat,*

N 3

Concipiunt :

*Concipiunt : hinc ille avium concentus in agris,
Hinc late pecudes, & ovantes gutture corvi.*

Virg. Georg. I. i.

*But with the changeful temper of the skies,
As rains condense, and sun-shine rarefies ;
So turn the species in their alter'd minds,
Compos'd by calms, and discompos'd by winds.*

*From hence proceeds the birds harmonious voice :
From hence the cows exult, and frisking lambs rejoice.*

DRYDEN.

The same may be observed of temperaments, which are inflamed by excess of heat, almost to a degree of madness. If there are twenty wicked actions committed at Rome in the space of a year, fifteen of them are perpetrated in the two months of the violent heats. There is a country in Europe where people that make away with themselves, are not so scarce as in other parts. It has been observed in the capital of that kingdom, where they keep bills of mortality, that out of sixty suicides in one year, fifty of them happen towards the beginning or end of winter. There prevails in that country a north-east wind, which offuscates the sky, and makes a very sensible impression even on the most robust. The magistrates of the criminal courts in France make another remark pretty near to the same purpose. They observe, that there are some years which are more fertile of great crimes than others ; tho' the malignities of those years cannot be attributed to an extraordinary scarcity of provisions, to a disbanding of troops, or to any other sensible causes.

Excess

Excess of cold congeals the imagination of some; and absolutely changes the temper and humor of others. From sweet and good humored in other seasons, they become almost savage and insupportable in violent frosts. I shall produce here only one instance of Henry III king of France. My author M. De Thou, a person of great dignity, whose narrative I shall translate, has given us the history of a prince that died but a few years before he wrote, and with whom he had an intimate familiarity.

As soon as Henry III began to live regularly, he was very seldom out of order. He used only during the violent frosts to have a kind of melancholy fit, which was visible to his domestics, who then found him peevish and difficult, whereas at other times he was an indulgent and good humored master. He was observed therefore to have no relish for his pleasures in very cold weather, but used to sleep little, and rising earlier than usual, he applied himself assiduously to business, determining affairs like a man governed by a rigid peevish temper. It was in these fits, that this prince tired his chancellor and his four secretaries of state with excessive writing. The chancellor De Chiverni, who served him from his infancy, had been sensible for a long time of the alteration caused by cold weather in his temperament. I remember a particular piece of confidence which that magistrate shewed me concerning this subject, when I happened to pass by Esclimont, a seat of his in the country of Chartrain, in my way to Blois, where the court resided at that time. The chancellor foretold me in conversation, a few days before the Guises were killed,

killed, that if the duke continued to vex the king as he did in such weather, that prince would have him certainly dispatched between four walls without any form of trial. The king's spirit, continued he, is easily provoked, even to a degree of fury, during such a frost as we feel at present. In fact, the duke of Guise was killed at Blois the day before Christmas eve, a few days after the conversation between the chancellor de Chiverni and the president de Thou.

As the qualities of the air which we have distinguished by the name of permanent, have a greater power over us than its vicissitudes, the changes which happen in our machine, when these qualities are altered, must consequently be more sensible and durable, than those caused by the vicissitudes. Wherefore these alterations are sometimes productive of epidemic disorders which carry off in three months six thousand persons in a town, where hardly two thousand die in the common course of the year.

Another sensible proof of the power which the qualities of the air have over our minds, is what we experience when travelling. As we change air very often upon a journey, almost in the same manner as we should change it, were there an alteration in the air of the country we live in, the air of one tract of land diminishes our ordinary appetite, and that of another augments it. A French refugee in Holland complains at least three times a day, that his gaiety and vivacity of spirit has abandoned him. Our native air is oft-times a remedy to us : That distemper which is called the *Hémvée*, in some countries, and

and fills the sick person with a violent desire of returning to his native home; when, as Juvenal expresses it,

notos tristis desiderat hædos,

JUV. sat.

is an instinct, which warns us, that the air we are in, is not so suitable to our constitution, as that which a secret instinct induces us to long for. The *Hæmœ* becomes uneasy to the mind, because it is a real uneasiness to the body. An air too different from that to which a person is accustomed, is a source of ailments and distempers.

*Nonne vides etiam cœli novitate & aquarum
Tentari procul a patria quicumque domoque
Adveniunt, ideo quia longè discrepat aer.*

LUCRET. de nat. rer. I. 6.

*A traveller in ev'ry place he sees,
Or hazards, or endures, a new disease,
Because the air, or water disagrees.*

CREECH.

An air which is very wholesome perhaps to the inhabitants of the country, is a slow poison to some strangers. Who is it that has not heard of the *Tabardillo*, a kind of fever attended with the most uneasy symptoms, which attacks almost all the Europeans a few weeks after their arrival in the Spanish West-Indies? The mass of blood formed by the air and nourishments of Europe, being incapable to mix with the American air, or with the chyle produced by the food of that country, is consequently dissolved. The only way of curing people

people seized with this distemper, which proves frequently mortal, is to bleed them plentifully, and to accustom them by degrees to the food of the country. The same disorder attacks the Spaniards born in America upon their coming to Europe; so that the native air of the father proves a kind of poison to the son.

This difference between the air of two countries is imperceptible to our senses, and out of the reach of any of our instruments; for we know it only by its effects. But there are some animals, which seem to distinguish it by their senses. They do not pass from the country they inhabit to adjacent provinces, where the air appears to us the same as that which they are so fond of. Thus we do not see on the banks of the Seine a large kind of bird, with which the Loire is covered.

C H A P. XV.

The power of the air over our bodies proved by the different characters of nations.

WHENCE comes it that all nations are so different from one another in shape, stature, inclination, and spirit, tho' they descend all from one and the same progenitor? Whence comes it, that the new inhabitants of a country resemble in a few generations, such as inhabited the same country before them, from whom they are not however descended? Why are those people who dwell within the same distance from the line, so different from one another?

another? A mountain only separates a people of a robust constitution from one of a weak temperament; and a nation naturally courageous from another of a most timorous disposition. Livy^a observes, that in the war with the Latins, their troops might have been distinguished from the Romans at the very first sight: The Romans were small and feeble, whereas the Latins were tall and robust. And yet *Latium* and the ancient territory of Rome were countries of a very inconsiderable extent, and bordering upon one another. Have the bodies of the Andalusian peasants the same natural conformation, as those of the peasants of old Castile? Are the inhabitants of the adjacent provinces as supple and nimble as the people of Biscay? Is it so easy to meet with fine voices in Auvergne, as in Languedoc? Quintilian says,^b that one may discover a man's country by his voice, as we may know the alloy of brass by its sound. The difference becomes still more sensible when we examine the nature of very distant countries: 'Tis surprizing between a Negro and a Russian. And yet this can proceed only from the difference of the air of the countries, where the ancestors of the present Negroes and Russians, who are all descendants of Adam, went first to settle. The first men who settled near the Line, must have left a posterity, who differed very little from the posterity of those who went in search of settlements towards the Arctic pole. The grand-children born some towards the Pole, and others near the Line, accord-

^a Liv. hist. 1. 6.

^b Non enim sine causa dicitur barbarum Græcumve; nam sonis homines ut æra tinnitu dignoscimus. QUINT. Inst. orat. 1. 2. c. 5.

ing to the progression of men's inhabiting the earth, must have had a lesser resemblance. At length, this resemblance diminishing every generation, and in proportion as colonies approached some towards the Line, and others the Arctic Pole, the races of mankind arrived at last to that difference, in which we behold them at present. Ten centuries might have been sufficient to render the descendants of the same parents, as different from one another as the Negroes and Swedes.

'Tis only three hundred years since the Portuguese planted on the western coast of Afric the colonies which they possess there at present; nevertheless the descendants of the first planters have no resemblance with the present natives of Portugal. The hair of the African Portuguese is short and curled, their nose flat, and their lips thick, like the Negroes whose country they inhabit. They have imbibed long since the complexion of those *Blacks* tho' they always claim the honorable appellation of *Whites*. On the other hand, the Negroes do not retain in cold climates the blackness they have in Afric: Here their skin grows whitish, insomuch that if a colony of Negroes were to settle in England, they would probably lose in a long series of time their natural color, in the same manner as the Portuguese of Cape-Verd have lost theirs in the countries near the Line.

Now if the diversity of climates is capable of producing such a variety and difference in the complexion, size, shape, and even in the very voice of men; it ought consequently to cause a greater difference in the genius, inclinations, and manners of

of nations. The organs of the brain, or the parts of the human body, which, physically speaking, decide the spirit and inclinations of men, are without comparison more compounded and more delicate, than the bones and other parts which determine their stature and force: They are more compounded than those which decide the sound of the voice and the agility of the body. Wherefore two men who happen to have their blood of a quality different enough to occasion an external dissimilitude, will be much more unlike one another in mind; and will have a greater difference of inclinations than of shape and complexion.

Experience seems to confirm this way of reasoning. All nations differ more in inclinations and mind than in make and color of body. As an ambassador of Rhodes said before the Roman senate,^a each people has its character, as well as every individual. Quintilian,^b after having given the moral reasons which were alledged for the difference between the eloquence of the Athenians, and that of the Asiatic Greeks, says that we must look for it in the natural character of both nations. In effect, drunkenness and other vices are commoner in some countries than in others: and the same may be also said of moral virtues. The conformation of the organs and the

^a Tam civitatum, quam singulorum hominum mores sunt. Gentes quoque, aliæ iracundæ, aliæ audaces, quædam timidae, in vinum, in venerem prouiores aliæ sunt. LIV. hist. l. 45.

^b Mihi autem orationis differentiam fecisse & dicentium naturæ videntur, quod Attici limati quidem & emuncti, nihil inane aut redundans ferebant. Asiaca gens tumidior. aliquis & jactantior va- niore, etiam dicendi gloria inflata est. QUINT. Inst. l. 12. c. 10.

temperament of body give an inclination to particular virtues or vices, which influences the generality of every nation. Wheresoever luxury is introduced, it has always a subserviency to the predominant inclination of the nation that falls into extravagance. According to the different taste of countries, people are ruined either by sumptuous buildings, or magnificent equipages, or by keeping nice and delicate tables, or in fine by downright excess of eating and drinking. A Spanish grandee squanders his money in intrigues and gallantry : but a Polish palatine's profusion consists in wine and brandy.

The Catholic religion is essentially the same with respect to its ceremonial and dogmatic parts, wherever the Roman communion is embraced. Each nation notwithstanding mixes something of its particular character in this worship. According to the genius of every nation, it is exercised with more or less pomp, more or less dignity, and with more or less sensible demonstrations of gladness or repentance.

There are very few heads, whose brains are so ill formed as not to make a man of wit, or at least a man of imagination in a certain climate ; and quite the contrary in another.

Tho' the Boeotians and Athenians were only separated from one another by mount Cithæron, yet the former were so well known to be a coarse heavy people, that to express a man's stupidity, it was usual to say, he seemed to have been born in Boeotia ; whereas the Athenians passed for the most sensible and ingenious people in the universe. I wave citing here the encomiums, which the Greek writers

have

have given of the wit and taste of the Athenians. The greatest part of them (some will say) were either born or chose to live at Athens. But Cicero, who knew the Athenians perfectly well, having lived a long time amongst them, and who cannot be suspected of a servile flattery to people that were subjects of his republic, gives the same testimony as the Greeks in their favor. *The judgment of the Athenians*, he says ^a, *was always so sound and prudent, that they could never listen to any thing but what was pure and elegant.* What M. Racine says in the preface to his *Plaideurs*, that the Athenians never laughed at nonsense, is only a translation in different words of the Latin passage of Cicero; and those who have censured the French author for writing it, have, to express myself in Montagne's words, given him a box on Cicero's ear, a witness who cannot be excepted against in the fact here in question.

The same reason which produced so great a difference between the Athenians and Bœotians, is the cause of so small a resemblance between the Florentines and some of their neighbours. Hence also it comes, that we see even in France so much sense and ready wit in the peasants of a province contiguous to another, where people of the same condition of life are almost stupid. Tho' the difference of air be not considerable enough in these people to make an external diversity in their bodies, it is sufficient notwithstanding to create a diversity in such organs, as are immediately employed in the functions of the soul.

^a *Athenienses quorum semper esse sincerum prudensque judicium, nibil ut possent nisi incorruptum audire et elegans.* Cic. de orat.

We even find minds which do not seem to be of the same species, when we reflect on the genius of people, whose difference is so considerable, as to be visible in their make and complexion. Does a peasant of North Holland, and a peasant of Andalusia think in the same manner? Have they the same passions? Are they actuated alike by those passions they feel in common? Are they willing to be governed in the same manner? When this external difference grows still greater, the difference of minds is prodigious. Behold, says the author of the *Plurality of worlds*², *how much the face of nature is changed between this and China. Different faces, different shapes, different customs, and almost different principles of reasoning.*

I do not chuse to give here a particular description of the character of each nation, or of the peculiar genius of every age, but shall refer my reader to Barclay's *Euphormio*, who treats this subject in one of the books of that satire, which goes generally by the name of *Icon animorum*. But I shall add one reflection to what has been hitherto said, to shew how probable it is, that the understanding and inclinations of men depend on the air they breathe, and on the country where they are bred. 'Tis that strangers who have settled in any country whatsoever, resemble the ancient inhabitants after a certain number of generations. The principal nations of Europe have at present the same character as the ancient people of

² M. de Fontenelle, *Plurality of worlds*, 2d evening.

the countries they now inhabit, notwithstanding they do not descend from those ancient people. I shall illustrate this remark by a few examples.

The present Catalonians are descended, for the most part, from the Goths and other foreign nations, who upon their first settling in Catalonia, brought different languages and customs with them, from those of the people who inhabited that country in the Scipio's time. 'Tis true, that those strange nations have abolished the ancient language, which has made room for another composed of the different idioms which they spoke. This is a thing however that has been decided intirely by custom: But nature has revived in the present inhabitants the manners and inclinations of the Catalonians in the Scipio's days. Livy says of the ancient Catalonians, *that it was as easy to destroy, as to disarm them*^a: Now all Europe knows whether the present Catalonians do not answer that character. Do not we discover the Castilians in the portrait Justin draws of the Iberians^b? *Their bodies are inured to hunger and fatigue; and their minds are so prepared for death, as not to be afraid of it. They can live upon very little, and are as much afraid of losing their gravity, as other people of losing their life.* The Iberians had as different a character of mind from that of the Gauls, as the present cha-

^a *Ferox gens nullam esse vitam sine armis putat.* Liv.

^b *Corpora hominum ad inediām laboremque, animi ad mortem parati. Dura omnibus & ad stricta parcimonia. Illis fortior taciturnitatis cura quam vita.* JUST.

acter of the Castilians differs from that of the French.

Tho' the French descend, the greatest part of them, from the Germans, and the other Barbarians settled in Gaul ; they have notwithstanding the same inclinations and character of mind as the ancient Gauls. 'Tis easy to discover in the present French the greatest part of those strokes which Cæsar, Florus, and the ancient historians attributed to that people. A particular talent of the French, for which they are celebrated all over Europe, is a surprizing industry, in imitating with ease the inventions of strangers. Cæsar gives this talent to the Gauls, whom he calls, *a people of great quickness of mind, extremely fit for imitating and executing whatsoever they are taught*^a. He was surprized to see how well the Gauls, whom he besieged, had imitated the most difficult military machines of the Romans, tho' they were quite new to them. Another very particular touch in the character of the French nation, is their insurmountable propensity to gaiety whether seasonable or not, which makes them conclude the most serious reflections with a song. Thus we find the Gauls characterised in the Roman history, and principally in a relation of Livy's. Hannibal at the head of a hundred thousand men, demanded a passage into Italy of the inhabitants of that country which is now called Languedoc, offering to pay ready money for what his men should consume, and menacing at the same time to lay their country waste with fire and sword, if they

^a *Genus summæ solertia, atque ad omnia imitanda atque efficienda, quæ ab quoque traduntur optissimum.* CÆS.

attempted

attempted to traverse his march. Whilst they were deliberating on Hannibal's proposition, the ambassadors of the Roman republic, who had only a very small retinue with them, demanded audience. After having talked very big for a great while of the senate and people of Rome, whom our Gauls had never heard mentioned but as enemies to such of their countrymen as had settled in Italy, the ambassadors proposed to obstruct the passage of the Carthaginians. This was really desiring the Gauls to make their country the theatre of war, in order to hinder Hannibal from transferring it to the banks of the Tiber. The proposition was indeed of such a nature, as not to be made but with great art and precaution even to ancient allies. *The audience therefore, says Livy^a, bursted out into a violent fit of laughter, insomuch that the magistrates had much ado to command silence, in order to give a serious answer to the ambassadors.*

Davila relates in the history of our civil wars^b an adventure of this sort, which happened at the conferences that were held for peace, during the siege of Paris by Henry IV^c. Upon cardinal Gondi's saying, that it was not hunger, but the love for their king which induced the Parisians to enter into a conference, the king's presence could not prevent the young lords from bursting out into laughter at the cardinal's discourse, which

^a *Tanto cum fremitu risus dicitur ortus, ut vix a magistratibus majoribusque natu juventus sedaretur.* Liv.

^b Davila, I. 11.

^c in 1590.

became really ridiculous by its boldness ; both parties being very well assured of the contrary. All Europe reproaches the French, to this very day, with their uneasiness and levity, which makes them quit their own country, to ramble in search of employments, and to list under every colors. Florus^a has observed of the Gauls, *that there were no armies to be found without Gallic soldiers.* If in Cæsar's time we meet with Gauls in the service of the kings of Judea, Mauritania, and Ægypt, do not we find Frenchmen in our days amongst all the troops in Europe, even among those of the king of Persia and the Great Mogul ?

The present English are not descended, generally speaking, from the Britons who inhabited that island when the Romans subdued it. Nevertheless the strokes with which Cæsar and Tacitus characterise the Britons, are extremely well suited to the English : For the one were not more subject to jealousy than the other. Tacitus observes^b, that Agricola found no better method of engaging the ancient Britons to make their children learn Latin, as well as Rhetoric and the other polite arts in use among the Romans, than to excite them by emulation, by making them ashamed to see themselves excelled by the Gauls. The spirit of the Britons, said Agricola, is of a better frame than that of the Gauls, and if they have a mind to take pains, it depends intirely on themselves, to surpass their neighbours. Agri-

^a. *Nullum bellum sine milite Gallo.* FLORUS.

^b *Jam verò principum filios liberalibus artibus erudire & ingenia Britannorum studiis Gallorum anteferre, ut qui modo lingua Romanam abnuebant, eloquentiam concupiscerent.* TAC.

cola's artifice had its desired effect, and the Britons who before scorned to speak Latin, grew even desirous of acquiring the beauties of the Roman eloquence. Let the English themselves judge, whether the artifice used by Agricola might not be employed amongst them at present with the like success?

Tho' Germany is in a much different condition at present, from what it was when Tacitus described it; tho' it is stocked now with towns, whereas it had formerly nothing but villages; tho' the morasses and the greatest part of the forests have been converted into meadows and plowed lands; in fine, tho' the ancient manner of dressing and living be consequently different in several things from that of the present inhabitants; we may distinguish nevertheless the genius and character of the old Germans in those of our times. Their women, like those in former days, follow the camps in much greater numbers than those of other countries. What Tacitus observes of the repasts of the old Germans, is true with regard to the generality of the moderns. Like their ancestors they reason very well concerning affairs when they are warm at table, but they never come to a conclusion but in cool blood^a. Thus we find in every respect the ancient people in the modern, tho' the latter profess a different religion, and are governed by different maxims.

It has been in all times observed, that the influence of climate is stronger than that of origin and blood.

^a *Deliberant dum fingerent nesciunt, constituent dum errare non possunt.* TAC.

The Gallogrecians descended from the Gauls who settled in Asia, became in five or six generations, as soft and effeminate as the Asiatics; tho' they sprung from warlike ancestors, who settled in a country, where they had nothing to depend upon but their valor and arms. Livy, speaking of an event which happened at an almost equal distance of time from the establishment of the Gallogrecian colony, and its conquest by the Romans, says of the Asiatic Gauls, *the Gallogrecians were a more warlike people at that time, not having yet degenerated from the spirit of the ancient Gauls^a.*

People of all countries illustrious for feats of arms, have grown effeminate and pusillanimous, after having been transplanted into lands, whose climate softens the native inhabitants. The Macedonians who settled in Syria and Ægypt, grew in a few years time downright Syrians and Ægyptians, and degenerating from their ancestors valor, kept only their language and standards. On the contrary, the Greeks who went to Marseilles, contracted the boldness and contempt of death, peculiar to the Gauls. But, as Livy says^b,

^a *Gallogreci ea tempestate bellicosores erant, Gallicos adhuc nondum exoluta stirpe gentis gestantes animos.* LIV.

^b *Sicut in frugibus pecudibusque, non tantum semina ad servandam indolem valent, quantum terræ proprietas cœlique sub quo aluntur mutant. Macedones qui Alexandriam in Ægypto, qui Seleuciam ac Babyloniam, quique alias sparsas per orbem terrarum colonias habent, in Syros, Parthos, Ægyptios degenerarunt. Massilia inter Gallos sita traxit aliquantulum ab accolis animorum. Tarentinis quid ex Spartana dura illa & horrida libertate mansit? Generosius in sua quidquid sede gignitur; insitum alienæ terræ, natura vertente se, degenerat.* LIV. hist. l. 28.

relating the facts here mentioned, 'tis the same thing with some men, as with plants and brutes. Now the qualities of plants do not depend so much on the place from whence the grain has been borrowed, as from the soil in which it is sown ; in like manner the qualities of brutes depend less on their breed, than on the country where they are born, and grow up."

Thus the grains which succeed very well in one country, degenerate when sown in another. The linseed which comes from Livonia, and is sown in Flanders, produces a very fine plant ; but that which grows in Flanders, and is sown in the same soil, bears nothing but a bastard-plant. The same may be said of the grain of melon, radish, and several other pulse, which must be renewed to have them good, at least after a certain number of generations, by sending for new grains to the country where they grow in full perfection. As trees shoot up, and produce fruit much flower than plants, the same tree gives different fruit, according to the soil where it first grew, and that to which it is transplanted. The vine transplanted from Champagne to Brie, produces very soon a wine, which has none of the qualities of the liquor it afforded in its primitive foil. True it is, that brutes have not so near a relation to the earth, as trees and plants ; nevertheless as the air makes animals live, and the earth nourishes them ; their qualities do not depend less on the places where they are bred, than the qualities of the trees and plants on the country where they grow. Let us go on with consulting experience.

Since Livy wrote his history, several nations in Europe have sent colonies into climates more remote and more different from that of their native country, than the climate of the Gauls was from that of Gallogrecia. It has happened also, that the change of manners, inclination, and spirit, which are unavoidable to those who change countries, has been more sudden and sensible in the new than in the ancient colonies.

The Franks who settled in the Holy Land, upon its being conquered by the first Crusade, became after a few generations, as pusillanimous and vicious as the natives of the country. The history of the latter Crusades abounds with bitter complaints against the treachery and effeminacy of the oriental Franks. The Sultans of Ægypt had no other method left of preserving the valor and discipline of their troops, than by recruiting them in Circassia, from whence their Mamelucks came. Experience had shewn them, that the children of the Circassians born and bred in Ægypt, had only the inclinations and courage of Ægyptians. The Ptolomys, and other sovereigns of Ægypt who were careful of keeping good troops, had always a standing army composed of foreigners. The natives of the country, who pretended to have performed such great exploits under Sesostris and their first kings, were very much degenerated at the time of Alexander the Great. Ægypt, since the conquest thereof by the Persians, has been always an easy prey to a handful of foreign soldiers. Since Cambyses's time, the natives have never, if I may say so, drawn an Ægyptian sword. Even at present an Ægyptian

Egyptian is not admitted into the troops maintained by the Grand Signor on the Ægyptian establishment: These must be composed of foreign soldiers.

The Portuguese established in the East-Indies are become as effeminate and cowardly as the natives of that country. Those invincible Portuguese in Flanders, where they made up one half of the famous Spanish infantry destroyed at Rocrois², had near relations in the Indies, who let themselves be beaten about like sheep. Those who can remember the particular events of the wars of the Low Countries, which gave birth to the republic of Holland, must know that the Flemish infantry could never stand against that which was composed of native Spaniards. But such as have read the history of the conquests of the Dutch in the East-Indies, must remember on the other hand, that a handful of Dutchmen used to put whole armies of Indian Portuguese to flight. I do not care to quote any odious writings, I shall only appeal to the Dutch themselves, whether their countrymen who are settled in the East-Indies, have preserved the manners and good qualities they had in Europe.

The court of Madrid, which has been constantly attentive to the particular character and genius of the different nations it governed, has always placed a greater confidence in the children of Spaniards born in Flanders, than in the offspring of Spaniards born in the kingdom of Naples. The latter were not put upon an equal footing with the natives of Spain, as the others were. This wary court has

² in 1643.

made

made it always her maxim not to intrust any em-
ployment of importance in the West-Indies to the
Creolian Spaniards, or such as were born in America.
And yet these Creolians are inhabitants born of Spa-
nish parents, without any mixture of American or
African blood. Those that are descended of a Spa-
nish Father and an American mother are called
Mestizo's; and when the mother happens to be a
negro, they are called Mulattoes.

The incapacity of those subjects has had as
great a share in this policy, as the fear of their
revolting. 'Tis difficult indeed to conceive, how
much the Spanish blood (a blood so brave and ge-
nerous in Europe) has degenerated in several pro-
vinces of America. It would be absolutely incredible,
did not twelve or fifteen different relations of the
expeditions of the Buccaneers to the new world, agree
all of them in this point, and furnish us with the
most convincing circumstances.

Brutes receive a different shape and conformation,
in the same manner as men, according to the coun-
try where they are born, or bred. There was no
such things as horses in America, when the Spani-
ards discovered that part of the world. 'Tis very
likely that the first which were transported thither
for breed, were the very finest of Andalusia where
the embarkation was made. As the expences of the
freight amounted to upwards of two hundred
crowns a horse, 'tis likely the purchase money was
not at all spared; especially as horses were then
exceeding cheap in that province. There are not-
withstanding some provinces in America where the
breed of horses has degenerated. The horses of St
Domingo

Domingo and the Antilles are small, ill-shaped, and have only the courage (if I be allowed to speak so) of the noble animals from which they are descended. There are indeed some other provinces in America, where the Andalusian breed is rather improved. Those of Chili are as much superior in beauty and goodness to the Andalusian horses, as these surpass those of Picardy. The Castilian and Andalusian sheep transported into other pastures, afford no longer such *precious* wool, as those mentioned by Juvenal,

Quas Bæticus adjuvat aer.

Juv. sat. 12.

By noble springs improv'd, and Bætic air.

POWER.

When the goats of Ancyra lose their mountain pasture, they cease to have that hair so vastly esteemed in the east, and known even in Europe.
There are countries where a horse is generally so gentle an animal, as to let himself be led by children : In other places, as in the kingdom of Naples, he is almost a savage animal, whom you must take particular care of. Horses even change their disposition and temper, by altering their air and food ; hence those of Andalusia are much more tractable in their own country than in ours. In fine, most animals cease to breed, when they are transported into a climate too different from their own : thus tigers, apes, camels, elephants, and several kinds of birds do not multiply in our countries.

a BUSBEQUUS ep. 1.

C H A P.

C H A P . XVI.

Objection drawn from the character of the Romans and the Dutch. Answer to this objection.

IT will be objected here perhaps, that there are two nations in Europe, whom the character given their ancestors by ancient writers do not suit at present. The modern Romans, it will be said, bear no manner of resemblance to those ancient Romans so famous for their military virtues, and whom Tacitus, describes as a people who were professed foes to all vain demonstrations of ceremonial respect; a people whose sole occupation was to establish and extend their authority. * Tiridates, brother of the king of Parthia, who came to Rome in order to pay homage (pursuant to our modern way of expressing it) for the crown of Armenia, would not have been so much afraid of the Roman ceremonial, continues the abovementioned author, had he been a little better acquainted with that nation. The Batavians and ancient Frieslanders (it will be still objected) were two warlike nations, who took up arms, as soon as the Romans attempted to lay any other tribute upon them, but that of military service. The present inhabitants of the province of Holland, which includes the isle of the Batavians, and a part of the country of the ancient Frieslanders, are intirely addicted to commerce. They surpass all o-

* *Apud quos jus imperii valet, inania transmittuntur.* TACIT.
Annal. lib. 15.

ther people in the regularity and order of their towns, and in their *municipal* government. The people are readier to pay the heaviest taxes that are raised in Europe, than to enter into the service. *The Belgians are very unfit for land service, and a Dutchman on horseback is a most ridiculous sight*, says Puffendorf^a, speaking of the present inhabitants of Holland, who are as willing to take foreign troops into their pay, as the Batavians were ready formerly to fight for foreigners.

With respect to the Romans, my answer is, that when the rest of Europe will resolve to lay aside their ceremonies, the Romans will not be the last to get rid of theirs. Ceremonies are the present fashion; for which reason they endeavour to excel other nations in this respect, as they were formerly superior to them in the military art. Perhaps the modern Romans would shew us that moderation in success, and that intrepidity in danger, which formed the character of the ancient Romans, if their princes were not of a profession which forbids them to aspire to military glory. Must people because they have courage, get themselves killed immediately in battle; as those that are born poets scribble verses? If the Romans have really degenerated, their degeneracy does not certainly extend to all sorts of virtues. No nation understands better how to behave resolutely, or to shew a seasonable compliance in business; and we may observe even in the common people of Rome, that art of

^a *Ad terrestrem militiam parum idonei sunt Belga, & equo insidens Batavus ludibrium omnibus debet.* PUFF. introd. ad hist. Europ.

insinuating esteem for their fellow citizens; an art that has been always one of the principal causes of a nation's reputation.

Besides, there has been such a prodigious change in the air of Rome and the adjacent country, since the time of the Cæsars, that it is not at all astonishing there should be a difference between the present and ancient inhabitants: Nay, in our system, this is the very thing that ought naturally to have happened, since the alteration of the cause must be always supposed to alter the effect.

In the first place, the air of the city of Rome, except the quarter of the Trinità di Monte, and that of the Quirinal, is extremely unwholesome during the dog-days, insomuch that it cannot agree but with those who are accustomed to it gradually, as Mithridates was to poison. People must even renew every year the habit of supporting the infected air, by beginning to breathe it the very first days of its alteration: for 'tis mortal to those who breathe it the first time, if it be at the height of its corruption. One is as little surprized to see a person die, who upon coming from the country, goes to lodge where the air is corrupted, or even those who at that time should remove from a wholesome quarter of the town, as to see a man expire when struck by a cannon-ball. The cause of this corruption of the air is not a secret to us. Rome was cut through as well under, as above ground, and every street had a *cloaca* or common shore under the pavement. These common shores met all at the Tiber by different channels, that were cleansed continually by the waters of fifteen aque-

ducts, which conveyed intire rivers to Rome; and these rivers discharged themselves into the Tiber by means of the *cloacæ*. The buildings of this vast city having been destroyed by the Goths, by the Normans of Naples, and by time; the ruins of the edifices erected on the seven hills have filled the adjacent valleys, insomuch that the ancient superficies of the earth lies frequently buried in these valleys full forty feet deep. This heap of rubbish has stopt up several branches, by which many of the lesser *cloacæ* communicated with the great ones, that terminated at the Tiber. The vaults being broken in by the fall of the neighbouring buildings, or thro' antiquity, consequently stopped several channels, and intercept-
ed the course of the waters. But the greatest part of the sinks, thro' which the rain and the waters of the ancient aqueducts that are still subsisting, fall into the *cloacæ*, have continued to lye open. The water has therefore come constantly into these chan-
nels, without finding any out-let. Here it stagnates, and becomes infected to such a degree, that when the *rummagers* happen to dig one of these chan-
nels, the stink and infection which exhales from thence, strikes them frequently with mortal distem-
pers. Those who have ventured to eat such fish as they have found there sometimes, have generally lost their lives for their rash curiosity. Now these channels are not so deep under ground, but that the heat, which is excessive at Rome during the dog-
days, extracts from thence most pestilential exhalations, which break out so much the easier, as the chinks of the vaults are only stopt with rubbish and gravel, which are not so close a sieve for sifting
the

the exhalations, as that of the common earth or natural soil.

Secondly, the air of the level country about Rome, which extends twelve leagues in those places where the Appenine removes farthest off from this city, reduces during the three hot months the very natives who are accustomed to it from their infancy, to a state of languishment and weariness almost incredible to those that have not seen it. In several parts the religious are obliged to quit their convents to go and spend the dog-days some where else. In fine, the air of the country about Rome strikes a stranger who exposes himself to its activity, in time of sleep, with as sudden and sure a death as the sword. This air is then always pernicious, from whatsoever quarter the wind blows, which is a convincing argument that the earth is in some measure the cause of its alteration. The infection therefore shews, that there has been some considerable change in the earth; whether this proceeds from its not being manured as in the time of the Cæsars; or whether it is to be attributed to the morasses of Ostia and Ofanté ², which are not drained as formerly; or whether in fine it arises from the mines of alum, sulphur, and arsenic, which in succession of time have been formed under the superficies of the earth, and emit at present, but especially in summer-time, more malignant exhalations, than those which were emitted, before they had attained their present degree of maturity. We see frequently in the country about Rome a phænomenon, which should

Pomptinæ paludes.

induce

induce us to think, that the alteration of the air proceeds from a new cause, that is, from the mines that have been perfected under the surface of the earth. During the violent heats, exhalations rise from the earth which lighten of themselves, and form long ridges or columns of fire, with the earth for their basis. Livy would have inserted a prolix recital of the sacrifices made for the expiation of these prodigies, had these phænomena been seen in that country when he wrote his history.

Another proof we have, that there has been a physical alteration in the air of Rome and the adjacent country, is, that the climate is not so cold as it was formerly in the time of the Cæsars, tho' the country was better inhabited and cultivated at that time, than it is at present. We are informed by the Roman annals, that in the year 480 of its foundation, the winter was so extremely cold, that the trees were killed with the frost. The Tiber was frozen over at Rome, and the earth covered with snow during the space of forty days. When Juvenal draws the picture of a superstitious woman, he says, that she causes the ice of the Tiber to be broken, in order to make her ablutions.

*Hibernum fracta glacie descendet in amnem,
Ter matutino Tyberi mergetur, & ipsis
Vorticibus timidum caput abluet, inde superbi
Totum Regis agrum nuda & tremebunda cruentis
Erepet genibus.* JUVEN. sat. 8.

*Thro' ye beat and plunge into the stream,
If so the God has warn'd them in a dream.*

Weak in their limbs but in devotion strong,
On their bare hands and feet they crawl along
A whole field's length, the laughter of the throng.

DRYDEN.

Here he speaks of the Tiber's being frozen over, as of an ordinary event. Several passages of Horace suppose the streets of Rome full of ice and snow. We should have been better informed concerning this subject had the ancients understood the use of Thermometers ; but tho' their writers have not instructed us with respect to this point, they let us know enough to be convinced that the winters were formerly severer at Rome, than at present. The Tiber is no more frozen there, than the Nile at Grand Cairo. They think it a very rigid winter in Rome, when the snow lyes two days upon the ground, or when they can observe a thin bit of ice for two nights together in some fountain expos'd to the north.

As for the Dutch, I answer that they do not live upon the same ground as the Batavians and ancient Frieslanders, tho' they inhabit the same country. The isle of the Batavians was indeed a low country, but it was covered with wood. With respect to the land of the ancient Frieslanders, which forms at present the greatest part of the province of Holland ; to wit, that which lies between the Ocean, the Zuiderzee, and the old bed of the Rhine which passes by Leyden, it abounded at that time with hills that were hollow within : This is expressed by the word *Holland* introduced in the middle age ; which signifies a hollow land in the language of that

that country. Tacitus^a informs us, that the abovementioned arm of the Rhine, which separated Friesland from the isle of the Batavians, preserved the rapidity that river has in its course, an evident proof that the country was then mountainous. The sea having insinuated itself into these cavities was the cause of the sinking of the earth, which has raised itself since above the surface of the waters that covered it after its depression, by the help of the sands which the waves of the sea brought thither, and of the slime which the rivers left behind them after frequent inundations, before they were restrained by dykes.

Another proof of what I have advanced is, that in that part of the province of Holland, which belonged to ancient Friesland, they find frequently, upon digging foundations, trees which are fastened to the ground by their roots, fifteen feet below the level of the country. And yet this country which is as smooth as a floor, is lower now than high water, and upon a level with very low water. This shews that the earth which the abovementioned roots of trees are fastened to, is a soil that was formerly funk. Those that have a mind to be further informed with regard to the time and other circumstances of these inundations, may read the two first volumes of M. Alting's work, intitled, *Descriptio agri Batavi.* 'Tis a work they will read with great utility, and not without regretting that this author died about thirty years ago, before he could leave us his third volume. Holland having been drained and

^a TACITUS Annal. 1. 2.

peopled again, it is now an even pasture land, cut into a vast number of canals, and covered with some lakes and morasses.^a The soil has changed its nature to such a degree, that the cows and oxen of that country are larger now than elsewhere, whereas formerly they were very small. In fine, a fourth part of its surface is covered with water, which was not the case perhaps of one twelfth part of it in former times. The people likewise having increased there more than in any other part of Europe, by means of events which are foreign to my present purpose; want and the facility of having pulse and milk-meats in a continued meadow, has accustomed the inhabitants to live upon this flegmatic diet; whereas the ancient inhabitants fed upon the flesh of their flocks, and of domestic animals that were grown wild, with which, pursuant to the observation of Tacitus and several other ancient writers, their woods abounded.

Sir William Temple, who was so much surprized at the difference of character between the Batavians and the Dutch, attempting to give the reason thereof, attributes it to their change of diet.^b Such revolutions as these on the surface of the earth, which always cause a great alteration in the air, and have been also accompanied with so great a change in their ordinary aliment, that the modern inhabitants live like fishermen and gardeners, whereas the old ones lived like huntsmen; such revolutions, I say, could never have happened without altering the character of the people.

^a TACITUS *Annal.* 1. 4.

^b *State of the United Provinces.* c. 4.

After all that has been hitherto said, 'tis more than probable, that the particular genius of each nation depends on the quality of the air they breathe. One has reason therefore to charge the climate, with that scarcity of genius's and wits, which is observable in some nations. *The temperature of hot climates, says Sir John Chardin, ^ enervates the mind as well as the body, and dissipates that fire of imagination so necessary for invention. People are incapable in those climates of such long watchings and strong applications, as are requisite for the productions of the liberal and mechanic arts.* 'Tis only towards the North we must look for the arts and trades in their highest perfection. Our author speaks of Ispahan ; and Roine and Athens are northern cities with respect to the capital of Persia. This is a sentiment founded on experience. Does not every body agree in attributing the stupidity of the Negroes and the Laplanders to the excess of heat or cold in their respective countries ?

C H A P. XVII.

Of the extent of climates fitter for the arts and sciences, than others. And of the changes which these climates are subject to.

IT may be here objected, that the arts and sciences have flourished under very different climates. Memphis, it will be said, is eighteen degrees nearer the sun than Paris, and yet the arts and sciences have flourished in these two cities.

^a Description of Persia chap. 7.

I answer, that 'tis not every degree of heat or cold, that is contrary to the happy nourishment of children, but only the very highest excess. Far from limiting the temperature of climate fit for the culture of arts and sciences, to four or five degrees, I am of opinion that this temperature may take in twenty or twenty five degrees of latitude. This happy climate may even extend itself and gain ground by the help of several favorable events.

For example, the extent of commerce may furnish the northern nations at present with the means, which they had not formerly of making a part of their ordinary nourishment of wines and other aliments which come from warm countries. Commerce, which has been surprizingly improved within these two last centuries, has discovered these things where they were before unknown ; and has even rendered them common in places, where they were formerly very scarce. The increase of trade has made wine as general a drink in several countries, where it does not grow, as in those kingdoms that have the pleasure of the vintage. It has put sugar and spices in northern countries on the footing of provisions, that are for general consumption. Of late years, both simple and compound brandy, coffee, chocolate, and other commodities that grow only in the very warmest climates, are in general use, even among the common people, in Holland, England, Poland, Germany, and the North. The salts and spirituous juices of those liquors throw a soul, or, to speak physically, an æthereal oil into the blood of the northern nations, which is not found in their own country food. These juices fill the blood of a northern

thern inhabitant with spirits formed in Spain and the very warmest climates. A portion of the air and sap of the land of the Canaries, is carried into England in the wines of those islands, which are transported thither in such great quantities. The frequent consumption therefore of the provisions and commodities of hot countries, draws the sun, as it were, nearer to the provinces of the North, and infuses a vigor and delicacy into the blood and the imaginations of the inhabitants of those countries, which was unknown to their ancestors, whose simplicity was satisfied with the productions of their own native soil. As people are subject at present in these countries to distempers, which they were strangers to, before the frequent use of strange aliments so much prevailed; which are not perhaps justly proportioned to the air of the country; they ought for this very reason to have a greater warmth and subtlety in their blood. Certain it is, that at the same time that new distempers appeared amongst them, or some distempers grew more frequent than formerly, others disappeared, or became not so common. I have heard Monsieur Regis, a famous physician of Amsterdam, say, that since the use of these provisions began to prevail generally among the inhabitants of that city, they were not subject to the twentieth part of the scorbutic distempers, with which they were formerly afflicted.

Tho' a country be at a certain distance from the Line, this is not sufficient to render the climate fit for breeding men of wit and abilities. The air may happen to be contrary by its permanent qualities, to the physical education of chil-

dren, who by the delicacy of their organs might have been designed for men of wit and talents. The mixture of the corpuscles, which enter into the composition of this air may happen to be bad by some excess of one of its good principles ; and the emanations of the earth may likewise chance to be heavy and coarse in some countries. All these defects, whereof we may conceive an infinite number, may be the occasion, that the air of a country, whose temperature seems to be the same as that of a neighbouring province, does not prove so favorable to the physical education of children, as the air which they breathe in the latter. Two regions that are at the same distance from the Pole, may have a climate physically different. Since the difference of the air of two neighbouring provinces renders the inhabitants of the one taller than the others why may it not make them more ingenious and sensible in one country than in another ? The size of men should naturally be more difficult to vary, than the quality and spring of the organs of the brain. The finer an organ is, the easier the blood that contributes to its nourishment, is able to change it. Now of all the organs of the human body, those are the most delicate which serve in the functions of the soul. What I have here said, is only an explication of the general opinion, which has always attributed the difference observable between different nations, to the different qualities of the air. *The climate of each country is always, in my opinion, the principal cause of the inclinations and customs of men, which are not more different amongst themselves, than the constitution of*

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the air varies in different places, says a person² to whom we may apply the encomium which Homer bestows upon Ulysses.

Qui mores hominum multorum vidit & urbes.

HOR. de art.

*Who Troy once fall'n to many countries went,
And strictly view'd the men and government.*

CREECH.

C H A P. XVIII.

*That we must attribute the diversity of the air
of different countries, to the nature of the
emanations of the earth which vary accord-
ing to the difference of countries.*

THE emanations of the earth are the only apparent cause, to which we can attribute the sensible difference, we observe between the qualities of the air, in countries equally distant from the Line. This opinion agrees very well with experience. The emanations, on which the qualities of the air depend, are themselves dependent on the nature of those bodies from which they exhale. Now, when a person comes to examine into the composition of the terrestrial globe in two countries which have a difference of air, he will find this composition different. There is more water, for instance, in a corner of Holland, than in the whole county of Kent. The

² Sir JOHN CHARDIN. tom. 2. p. 4.

bosom of the earth does not include the same bodies in France as it commonly contains in Italy. In several parts of the latter the earth is full of alum, sulphur, brimstone, and other minerals. These bodies in France are not in the same quantity in proportion to other bodies, as in Italy. We find thro' almost all France that the gravel consists of marl, or of a kind of a fat, whitish, soft stone, in which there is a vast deal of volatile salts. 'Tis salt also that predominates in the soil of Poland; insomuch that they find intire mines thereof in several parts of that kingdom. These are sufficient not only for the consumption of the country, but moreover for that of several neighbouring provinces. 'Tis to this salt so predominant in the soil of Poland, that philosophers attribute the surprizing fertility of the greatest part of its provinces, as likewise the extraordinary bigness of its fruit, and if I be allowed to express myself thus, the huge volume of the bodies born and nourished in that country. In England the gravel is composed principally of lead, pewter, sea-coal, and other minerals, which vegetate and improve continually.

We may even venture to say, that the difference of these emanations is obvious, in some measure, to our senses. The color of the ambient air, as also of the clouds which form a painted horizon at the setting and rising of the Sun, depend on the nature of the exhalations which fill the air, and mix with the vapors, of which these clouds are formed. Now every body may observe, that the atmosphere and the clouds which glitter in the horizon, are not of the same color in all countries. In Italy, for example,

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the atmosphere is of a greenish blue, and the clouds of the horizon are of a very deep yellow and red. In the Netherlands the atmosphere is of a pale blue, and the clouds of the horizon are only tinged with a whitish color. This very difference is observable in the painted *skies* of Titian and Rubens, these two painters having represented nature such as it appears in Italy and the Low Countries where they copied it. I conclude therefore from what has been hitherto set forth, that as the qualities of the earth decide the particular taste of fruits in different countries, so they determine also the nature of the air. The qualities and properties of the earth are alike the cause of the diversity there is in the air of two different countries, as they are the cause of the different taste of wines, which grow in neighbouring provinces.

Now this cause is subject by it's nature to a vast number of vicissitudes and alterations. As the earth is a mixt body composed of fluids and solids of different kinds and species, they must both of them incessantly act, and produce continual fermentations, especially as the air and central fire contribute also to throw the matter into motion. As the leaven, as well as the mixture and proportion of this leaven, is not always the same, the fermentations do not always terminate in the same production. For which reason the emanations of the same soil cannot be always the same in the same country ; but must be subject to divers alterations.

Experience adds a great weight to this argument. Does the very same earth emit every year the same quantity of those exhalations, which form the matter
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of thunder and lightning? As there are some countries more subject to thunder, than others, so there are some years in which it thunders ten times oftner than in others. There were hardly two claps of thunder heard at Paris in the summer of 1716; but it thundered thirty times and upwards the summer of 1717. The same thing happens with respect to earthquakes. Are all years equally pluvious in the same country? 'Tis easy to see in the Almanacks of the Observatory the difference there is in the quantity of rain which falls at Paris in the course of two different years. This difference amounts sometimes to very near two thirds. We cannot attribute the inequality which is observable in the eruptions of vulcans or fiery mountains, to any other cause but to the variety of fermentations which are continually working in the bosom of the earth. 'Tis well known, that these formidable mountains vomit more fire some years than others, and that they are sometimes a considerable while without any eructations at all. In fine, are all years equally wholesome, pluvious, win-
dy, cold, warm, in the same country?

The sun and the emanations of the earth decide in France, as well as elsewhere, the temperature of different years; for we cannot assign any other cause, unless we should have recourse to the influence of the stars. Now out of these two causes, there is one of them that never varies its action, that is the sun. We must therefore attribute the immense difference we observe in France between the temperature of two different years, to the variation that happens in the emanations of the earth. I say that the action of the sun does not vary. It mounts and descends at Pa-

tis every year at the same height. If there be some difference in its elevation, 'tis sensible only to modern astronomers, and it can produce no other difference between the summer of two years, than that which is observed between the summers of Senlis and Paris. The distance there is between Paris and Senlis from North to South, amounts to the greater elevation which the sun may have one year at Paris, than another.

The difference in the temperature of years is quite another sort of variation. Some summers at Paris are intolerably hot; others are scarce a degree different from cold weather. 'Tis frequently colder on midsummer day, than it was six weeks before. The winter is sometimes very rigid in the same city; and the frost lasts forty days successively. Other years the winter slides away without three consecutive days of frost. In some years there falls twenty-two inches of rain-water at Paris: Other years there does not fall eight. Some years the winds are more frequent and violent than others: The same may be observed of every country: For all of them admit of a different temperature of years. 'Tis true that in southern climates, the seasons of rain and heat are not so irregular as in our parts. These heats and rains, more or less violent, generally come pretty near on the same days; wherefore the cause varies indeed in those countries, but is not so capricious as in France.

But, (some will say) tho' the sun ascends every year to the same height, may not there be some obstruction, such as a spot, which may slacken his ac-

* See the Almanacks of the Observatory.

tion in some years, more than in others? If so, he would have the greatest share in producing those variations, whose cause you go in search of into the bosom of the earth.

My answer is, that experience will not permit us to impute this variation to the sun. There would be a kind of rule in this irregularity, if it proceeded from the remissness of the action of the sun; I mean that all countries would feel this irregularity in proportion to their distance from the line, and that the sun's elevation would constantly decide the degree of heat, let it be what it will in a particular year. Thus a warmer summer than usual at Paris, would suppose a summer unusually warm at Madrid. A very mild winter at Paris, would suppose milder weather than usual at Madrid. But the thing is otherwise. The winter of 1699 and 1700 was very mild at Paris, and very rigid at Madrid. It froze fifteen days successively at Madrid, and not two days successively at Paris. The summer of 1714 was very dry and warm at Paris; the same summer was exceeding rainy and tolerably cold in Lombardy. The day of the summer solstice is sometimes colder than the day of the equinox. Thus the variation of the temperature of years is such that it cannot be attributed to the sun. We must therefore impute it to a particular cause in each country, that is, to the difference of the emanations of the earth. 'Tis this also which renders some years more subject to distempers than others.

— — — *Ipsâ saepe coorta*

De terrâ surgunt. — — —

LUCRET. I. 6.

There are some epidemical disorders which rise insensibly out of the ground, but there are others which we see start up, as it were, of a sudden. Such are the diseases which break out in places, where there have been lately great earthquakes, which places were very wholesome before these subterraneous commotions. The first *stratum* or cover of the earth is composed of common clay, stones, flints, and sand. These wise nature has employed to cover the second *stratum*, composed of minerals and fat earth, whose juices contribute to the fecundity of the outward soil. These juices either ascend into the tubes of plants, or else they rise in the air, after having been rarefied or filtered thro' the first *stratum* of the earth, and there they form that aerial nitre, which, falling afterwards upon the ground, from whence it sprung, contributes so much to its fertility. Now when there happens to be any of those great earthquakes, several parts of this second *stratum* are laid open, and exposed to the immediate action of the air and sun, which finding no interposition, loosens and attracts too large a quantity of *moleculæ*. Besides, these *moleculæ* being as yet too coarse, ought not to have risen in the air, till they had been rarefied by passing thro' the first *stratum*, as thro' a sieve. Thus the air of that part of the country becomes infected, and continues so till the uncovered earth is exhausted of a part of its juices, or till the dust which is continually wafted by the winds, has covered it with a new crust.

But, as we have observed already, there are some epidemical distempers, which rise insensibly, as it were, out of the earth, without any perceptible change.

change. Such are the pestilential maladies which break out sometimes in a country without being imported from other parts ; the cause whereof can be nothing else but the alterations which happen in the emanations of the earth.

CHAP. XIX.

That the difference we observe in the genius of people of the same country in different ages, must be attributed to the variations of the air.

I CONCLUDE therefore from what has been hitherto set forth, that as the difference of the character of nations is attributed to the different qualities of the air of their respective countries ; in like manner the changes which happen in the manners and genius of the inhabitants of a particular country, must be imputed to the alterations of the qualities of the air of that same country. Wherefore as the difference observable between the French and Italians, is assigned to the difference there is between the air of France and Italy ; so the sensible difference between the manners and genius of the French of two different ages, must be attributed to the alteration of the qualities of the French air. As the quality of our air varies in some respects, and continues unvaried in others, it ensues that the French in all ages will have a general character which will distinguish them from other nations ; tho' this will not prevent a difference between

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the French of different ages. 'Tis thus that wines have a particular taste in each soil, which they always preserve, tho' they are not always of equal goodness. Hence the Italians, for instance, will be evermore fitter for painting and poetry, than the inhabitants of the provinces bordering on the Baltick. But as the cause which produces this alteration between nations, is subject to several changes, it seems that some generations in Italy must have greater talents for excelling in these arts, than others.

The whole question concerning the pre-eminence between the ancients and moderns, says the great defender of the latter^a, being once rightly understood, is reducible to this point, whether or no the trees which grew formerly in our fields, were larger than those in our days. Methinks, continues he, that the surest way of deciding this point is to consult natural philosophy, who has the secret of abridging a great many disputes which Rhetoric would protract to eternity.

Let us consult her, I freely give my consent. What answer does she give us? She tells us two things. The first is, that some plants have in all times attained a greater perfection in one country than in another: The second, that even in the same country trees and plants do not produce every year fruit of equal goodness.

We may apply to years what Virgil says of countries, that all their productions are not alike excellent.

— *Non omnis fert omnia tellus.*

The cause of this effect shews an activity to which we may attribute the difference observable in

^a FONTENELLE, *Digression on the ancients.*

the spirit and genius of nations and ages. Does it not operate sensibly on the spirit of men, by rendering the temperature of climates as various as we see it in different countries and years? Is not the temperature of the climate either very prejudicial to the physical education of children, or exceeding favorable? Why should we not allow, that children educated in France in a particular series of years, remarkable for a happy temperature, have a better construction of brains, than such as have been bred there during a succession of years, noted for intemperature? Does not every body attribute the capacity of the Florentines and the stupidity of the people of Bergamo, to the difference there is between the air of Bergamo and Florence?

But (some will object) if these changes which you suppose to happen successively in the earth, air, and intellectual faculties, were real; we should observe in the same country some alteration in the configuration of human bodies. Wherefore the change you imagine happens within them, would be accompanied with a sensible alteration in their external parts.

My answer is in the first place grounded on all that has been said before, that the cause which is powerful enough to act on the brains, may not be so strong perhaps as to alter the stature of the body. Secondly, that were we to make in France, for instance, an exact and continued observation on the size and strength of bodies, perhaps we should find, that there are some generations of men who are bigger and robuster than others. Very likely we should discover that there are some ages, in which the human species

species continually improves, and others in which it declines. When we observe that our military people find the weight of a cuirass and helmet an insupportable burthen, whereas a whole complete suit of armour did not appear too great a weight to our ancestors ; when we compare the fatigues they must have undergone in the wars of the Crusades, to the delicacy of our camps ; is it not very natural for us to fall into that opinion ?

It must not be alledged, that 'tis the softness of education which enervates the body. Is it only in our days that fathers and mothers are too fond of their children ? Have not children of all ranks and conditions been bred up by their parents in former times, as they are at present ? Is it not because children are born with a more delicate constitution, that experience supplies us with more scrupulous precautions for their preservation ? 'Tis natural for parents to have the same care and attention in the physical education of their children, as they remember they themselves stood in need of : 'Tis natural for them to judge of their delicacy, by what they felt themselves in their infancy. Experience alone, by shewing us that these cares are no longer sufficient, can make us think, that we must employ more attention and management for the preservation of our children than was taken for ourselves. Does not the impulse of nature, which is very seldom resisted, render those exercises that strengthen the body, amiable even in our days to such as have a sufficient share of health to go through them ? Why therefore does the generality of mankind in our days neglect them ? In fine, does

our softness and effeminacy proceed from our kind of living ; or is it because we are born with weaker stomachs than our ancestors, that every one in his station seeks for new preparations of aliments, and easier nourishment ; and that the abstinences which those very ancestors found no great difficulty in observing, are in our days absolutely impracticable with respect to one third of the world ? Why should we not think, that 'tis the physical part which prescribes laws to the moral ? I am therefore apt to imagine, that the kind of life, for instance, the custom of wearing more or less cloaths in particular seasons, which takes place successively in the same country, depends on the vigor of our bodies, which enables them to inure themselves to more or less cold, according as they are more or less robust. About fifty years ago, people were not so warmly clad in France during the winter, as they are at present, because their bodies at that time were generally more robust and less sensible of the injuries of the cold.

I have observed, says Sir John Chardin ^a, *in my travels, that as our manners follow the temperament of the body, pursuant to Gallien's observation, so the temperament of the body follows the quality of the climate ; insomuch that the customs or habits of people are not the effect of mere caprice, but of some natural cause or necessity, which is not discovered till after a very exact research.* When our bodies grow weaker and more sensible of the injuries of the air, it follows of course, that people change something in their manners and customs, as they would,

^a Travels to Persia, l. 2. p. 275.

were the climate to be altered : Their wants vary alike by either of the changes.

There are old folks in our days who affirm, that a certain court was composed of handsomer women and better built men, than another court peopled with the descendants of the former. Let us but enter into an exact inquiry of a hundred families in particular ages, and we shall find fourscore, in which the son is of an inferior size to that of his father. The race of mankind would degenerate in process of time into pygmies, if those days of decline and degeneracy of size, were not succeeded by times, in which the body is raised again to its former stature. Thus the weak and robust generations seem to have an alternate succession.

We can attribute likewise the difference which is observed between the behaviour and politeness of different ages, to no other cause, but to the changes which happen in the qualities of the air of the same country. There have been times, when it was an easy matter to prevail upon the principal men of a nation to quit their families. It was then no difficult task to persuade them to go in quest of military glory a thousand leagues from their own country, in contempt of the fatigues of a long journey, which to their soft posterity would appear like the labors of Hercules. 'Tis because (some will say) it was the fashion at that time to engage in such expeditions. But it would be impossible to introduce such fashions in our days : They cannot be established but by the help, as it were, of physical conjunctures. Can any one imagine, that were the most eloquent preacher in our times to announce

a crusade, he would find a great many barons to follow him beyond sea.

C H A P. XX.

Of the difference of manners and inclinations in people of the same country in different ages.

THERE are likewise ages, whose events make us imagine, that some physical alteration has happened in the constitution of mankind. Such are those, wherein men, remarkable in other respects for politeness and even learning, abandon themselves to most unnatural actions with a shocking facility. This was the case of the French nation during the reigns of Charles IX and Henry III. Every personage, that makes any thing of a figure in the history of Charles IX and in that of his brothers, even to the very clergy, died by a violent death. The lords of that time, such as marshal St André, the constable de Montmorenci, prince Condé, and the duke of Joyeuse, were slain in battle, perished by assassination and villany. The blows were given by men that knew them, and who aimed at their life in particular ; and we even know the names of those that murdered them. I know not by what fatality Henry II, the three kings his children, and Henry IV, who succeeded one another immediately, died all five by a violent death ; a misfortune which happened not to any of our kings of the third race, tho' most of them reigned in very difficult times,

times, and when men were more unpolished than in the sixteenth century. We have seen civil wars in France in the seventeenth century, and parties as much inflamed and animated against one another under Lewis XIII and Lewis XIV, as it was possible for the factions that followed the dukes of Guise or the admiral de Coligni in the preceding century ; and yet the history of the latter commotions has not been full of those poisonings, assassinations, and other tragic events so common in France under the latter princes of the branch of Valois.

Nor will it avail to say, that the motive of religion which influenced the civil wars during the reign of the Valois, poisoned people's minds ; a motive which did not affect our last civil wars. I should say for answer, that as the precept of loving one's enemies is not contested either by Rome or Geneva, it follows of consequence, that whosoever engages sincerely in either cause, ought to have a horror for murder or assassination. It was a wicked policy, seconded by the spirit of the age, which induced people whose whole religion (to make use of the expression of the times) consisted in a red or white scarf, to perpetrate such flagitious villanies. If any one should reply, that those wretches, tho sincere Catholics or Huguenots, were people of wild extravagant imaginations, and, in a word, honest fanatics ; this would be espousing my sentiment. As there were no such persons during the last civil wars, we must conclude, that there are times, in which men of this character, who always find occasions of running into the like excesses, are commoner than at other times. . This

In effect, were such rivers of blood spilt on account of the heresy of Arrius, which raised such disputes and commotions in Christendom ? There had been several contests in France in point of religion, before the Reformation ; but except the wars against the *Albigenses*, those disputes never occasioned the effusion of French blood ; because there was not that same acrimony in their humors, nor the same inflammation in their minds.

Whence comes it, that men in some ages are seized with an invincible aversion to all mental application, and have so little an inclination to study, that every method which is used in order to excite them to it, remains a long time ineffectual ? The most painful exercises of the body, and the greatest dangers, do not frighten them so much as application. What privileges and advantages have not our kings been obliged to grant to graduates and the clergy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in order to encourage the French to shake off that extreme gross ignorance, into which they had been plunged so long by some unknown fatality ? There was so great a necessity at that time for exciting people to study, that in some countries a part of the benefit of the clergy was extended to such as knew how to read. In fact, it was a common thing to see great lords, who could not sign their own names, or who wrote them without knowing the power of the characters of which they were composed, but copied only from the pattern set before them. On the other hand, it was usual to see men, who were ready

ready to face the greatest dangers, or to engage in the most laborious exercises. 'Tis upwards now of a century since people have had a strong inclination for study, and for practising the liberal arts, tho' they have not had the same encouragement as formerly. Men of an indifferent share of learning, and persons who profess the liberal arts with slender or mean capacities, are grown so common, that some are whimsical enough to think, there ought to be as much care taken at present to limit the number of such as profess the liberal arts, as there was formerly to augment it. Their number, say they, is increased too high, in proportion to those who profess the mechanic arts ; and the disproportion between them is become prejudicial to society. *As we are so unfortunate, says Seneca^a, as to be luxurious in every thing else, so we are troubled also with an intemperance of letters.*

In fine, how comes it that we observe in the same country some ages so subject to, and others almost intirely exempt from, epidemical disorders ; if this difference does not proceed from the alterations that happen in the qualities of the air, which varies in different ages ? We reckon four general plagues in France from 1530 to 1636. During the succeeding fourscore years to 1718, very few cities in France have been visited with this scourge. 'Tis upwards of fourscore years since the Lazerettos of the greatest part of this kingdom have not been opened. Strange distempers rise in particular ages, and after shewing them-

^a *Ut omnium rerum sic litterarum quoque intemperantia laborans.* SENECA epist. 106.

selves two or three times during a certain number of years, they disappear at last for ever. Such were in France the *burning distemper*, and the *cholic of Poitou*. When we see so many visible effects of the alterations of the qualities of the air; when we have so distinct a knowledge that this alteration is real, and are even acquainted with the cause thereof, can we forbear attributing thereto, the sensible difference we observe in the same country between men of two different ages? I conclude therefore with the words of Tacitus^a, "That the world [is] subject to changes and vicissitudes, whose periods are unknown to us; but their revolutions bring back by an alternate succession, politeness and barbarism, as well as the talents of mind, and the strength of body, and consequently the increase and decay of the arts and sciences; in the same manner as the revolution of the sun is attended with an alternate succession of seasons." 'Tis a consequence of the plan adopted by the Creator, and of the means he has chosen for its execution.

^a *Rebus cunctis ineſt quidam velut orbis, ut quemadmodum temporum vices, ita morum vertantur.* TACIT.

C H A P. XXI.

*Of the manner in which the reputation of poets
and painters is established.*

I Intend to perform here the promise I made in the commencement of this work, to examine before I had done, the manner in which the reputation of painters and poets is established. Whatever my subject will oblige me here to say with respect to the success of verses and pictures, will serve for a further confirmation of what I have already observed relating to the most important and essential merit of these productions.

New performances are approved at first by judges of a very different character, that is, by men of the same profession, and by the public. They would be soon rated at their just value, were the public as capable of defending and maintaining their sentiment, as they know how to espouse the right party. But their judgment is easily perplexed by persons who make profession of the art, to whose jurisdiction the new production belongeth. Now these persons are frequently subject to make a false report of things, for reasons which we shall give hereafter. They therefore throw such a mist over the truth, that the public continues frequently for some time in a state of uncertainty or error. They do not know exactly what character the new work merits in a general consideration. They remain suspended with regard to the question, whether it be good or bad taken altogether, and they even sometimes give credit, but only

only for a short time, to persons of the profession that impose upon them.

This first time being elapsed, the public appraises a work to its full value, and gives it the rank due to its merit, or condemns it to oblivion. 'Tis never deceived in this decision, because it judges disinterestedly, and likewise by a sensible perception.

When I say, that the public judgment is disinterested, I do not pretend to affirm that one does not meet with some whom friendship engages in favor of authors, and others who are prejudiced against them by a particular aversion. But these are in so small a number, in comparison to disinterested judges, that their prevention hath no great influence in the general suffrage. A painter, and much more a poet (who generally is a great man in his own imagination, and frequently of that violent character of spirit, as excludes any indifference of persons) fancies to himself, that a great town, or a whole kingdom is peopled intirely with rivals or adorers of his merit. He has a notion that he has divided it into two factions, as much animated the one for him, and the other against him, as the Guelfs and Gibellines were formerly for and against the emperors; when actually there are not fifty who have declared either way, or who concern themselves with any warmth in the success of his verses. The greatest part of those whom he supposes to be absolutely determined by sentiments of hatred or friendship, are very indifferent about the matter, and are disposed to judge of the author by the comedy, and not of the comedy by the author.

They

They are ready to speak their opinion with as much freedom, as friends and fellow-boarders at the same house give their sentiment with regard to a cook, whom the master of the house has a mind to make a trial of. This is a judgment which cannot be said to be one of the least equitable in our country.

C H A P. XXII.

That the public judges right of poems and pictures in general. Of the sense we have to distinguish the merit of these works.

THE public gives not only a disinterested judgment of a work, but judges likewise what opinion we are to entertain of it in general, by means of the sense, and according to the impression made thereon by the poem or picture. Since the chief end of poetry and painting is to move us, the productions of these arts can be valuable only in proportion as they touch and engage us. A work that is exquisitely moving, must be an excellent piece, take it all together. For the same reason, a work which does not move and engage us, is good for nothing; and if it be not obnoxious to criticism for trespassing against rules, 'tis because it may be bad, without any violation of rules; as on the contrary one full of faults against rules, may be an excellent performance.

Now our senses inform us whether a work touches or makes a proper impression upon us, much better than all the dissertations composed by critics, to explain

plain its merit, and calculate its perfections and defects. The way of discussion and analysis, which those gentlemen employ, is indeed very proper, when the point is to find out the causes why a work pleases or not; but this method is inferior to that of the sense, when we are to decide the following question: Does the work please, or does it not? Is the piece good or bad in general? For these are both the same thing. Reason therefore ought not to intervene in a judgment which we pass on a poem or picture in general, except it be to account for the decision of our senses and to explain what faults hinder it from pleasing, and what charms are capable of rendering it engaging. Reason will not permit us (if I may say so) to reason on a question of this nature, unless it be designed to justify the judgment which the sense has passed. The decision of the question does not belong to the jurisdiction of reason: This ought to submit to the judgment pronounced by sense, which is the competent judge of the question.

Do we ever reason, in order to know whether a ragoo be good or bad; and has it ever entered into any body's head, after having settled the geometrical principles of taste, and defined the qualities of each ingredient that enters into the composition of those messes, to examine into the proportion observed in their mixture, in order to decide whether the ragoo be good or bad? No, this is never practised. We have a sense given us by nature to distinguish whether the cook acted according to the rules of his art. People taste the ragoo, and tho' unacquainted with those rules, they are able to tell, whether

ther it be good or no. The same may be said in some respect of the productions of the mind, and of pictures made to please and move us.

We have a sense, which judges of the merit of works, that consist in the imitation of objects of a moving nature. This is the very sense, which would have judged of the object, that the painter, poet, or musician has imitated. 'Tis the eye, when we are to judge of the coloring of a picture. 'Tis the ear, when we are to decide, whether the accents of a recitative be moving, whether they agree with the words, and whether the music be melodious. If we are to determine, whether the imitation we are entertained with in a poem or in the composition of a picture, be capable of exciting our pity, and of moving us ; the sense whose province it is to judge thereof, is the very sense which would have been moved, and have judged of the object imitated. 'Tis that sixth sense we have within us, without seeing its organs. 'Tis a portion of ourselves, which judges from what it feels, and which, to express myself in Plato's words^a, determines, without consulting either rule or compass. This is, in fine, what is commonly called sense or sensitive perception.

The heart is agitated of itself, by a motion previous to all deliberation, when the object presented is really affecting ; whether this object has received its being from nature, or from an imitation made by art. Our heart is made and organized for this very purpose : Its operation therefore runs before our reasoning, as the action of the eye and ear

^a De Repub. l. 10.

precedes it in their sensations. 'Tis as rare to see men born without the sense here mentioned, as 'tis to meet with people born blind. *But it can be no more communicated by art, says Quintilian^a, to those that have it not from nature, than the sense of taste, or smelling.* Wherefore imitations produce their effects, so as to make us laugh or cry, and engage us, before our reason has time to act or examine. We weep at a tragedy, before we have discussed whether the object which the poet presents us, be naturally capable of moving, or whether it be well imitated. Our sense tells us its nature, before ever we have thought of inquiring into it. The same instinct which would force a sigh from us, upon meeting a mother attending the funeral of an only son, draws tears from us, when the stage exhibits a faithful imitation of this melancholy event. We know whether a poet has pitched upon a moving object, and whether he has properly imitated, as we can tell, without reasoning, whether the painter has drawn a beautiful figure, or our friend's portrait be like the original. To judge whether this portrait has a likeness, or no, must we take the proportions of our friend's countenance, and compare them to those of the portrait? The painters themselves will acknowledge, that they have a sudden sense which goes before all examen, and that an excellent picture which they never saw before, makes so quick an impression upon them, as enables them, before any discussion, to judge in general of its merit. This first *Apprehension* is even sufficient to

^a *Nec magis arte traditur, quam gustus aut adoratus.* QUINT.
Inst. 1. 6. c. 6.

give them a knowledge of the noble artist.

We are therefore in the right to say, that if a person has but understanding, he can judge of every thing, for here by understanding we mean a justness and delicacy of sense. Wherefore Monsieur Pascal^a had not properly digested what he wrote, where he says, *That those who judge of any work by rule, are with respect to others, as a man, who has a watch, is with regard to the rest of the company that have none, when they want to know, what o'clock it is.* I fancy this is one of those thoughts which a little meditation would have made him explain; for every one knows that the work here mentioned is composed of ideas, which Monsieur Pascal committed to paper as they occurred to him, rather in order to examine than publish them. After his decease they were printed just in the condition in which they were found. When we are to decide the merit of a work that was made to move us, 'tis not the rules that are our watch, 'tis the impression we receive from the work. Our watch goes right, in proportion as our sense is delicate.

Boileau builds upon this reason, when he affirms that the greatest part of profest critics, who strive to supply the defect of their sense by their knowledge of the rules, do not form as sound a judgment of the merit of excellent works, as men of genius of the first rank, who have not made so exact a study of those rules. *Give me leave to tell you,* says he to Monsieur Perrault, *that even in our times, 'tis not, as you imagine, the Schrevelius's, the Pera-*

^a PASCHAL's thoughts. chap. 31.

redus's, the Menagiis's, nor, to express myself in Moliere's terms, the learned In I U S, who have the greatest relish for the beauties of Homer, Virgil, Horace, and Cicero. 'Tis your genius's of the first class, whom I have always seen most affected with reading those excellent authors: 'Tis your men of the most exalted situations. And if I were absolutely obliged to cite some of them, you would be surprised with the great names I should commit to paper: you would find among the rest not only the Lamoignons's, the Daguefeaux's, the Trois-villes's, but likewise the Conde's, the Conti's and the Turenne's.

In effect, the ancient poets would be as much astonished to hear, what passages of their works the generality of their commentators are most displeased with, as if they were to know what Abbot de Marolles, and other translators of his rank, make them say sometimes. Are professors that have taught Logic all their lives, the properest persons for knowing when a man speaks good sense, and reasons justly?

If the chief merit of poems and pictures were to consist in being conformable to written rules, one might then say that the best method of judging of their excellency, as also of the degree of esteem they ought to hold in the minds of men, would be certainly that of discussion and analysis. But the principal merit of poems and pictures is to please us. This is the chief end which painters and poets aim at, when they take so much pains to conform to the rules of their art. We are therefore able to judge whether they have succeeded, when we know whether their performance is affecting or no. One may say

Say indeed, that a work, in which the essential rules are violated, cannot be pleasing. But this is better known, by judging from the impression made by that work, than by forming a judgment of it from the dissertations of critics, who very seldom agree with respect to the importance of each rule. Wherefore the public is capable of judging right with relation to verses and pictures, without being acquainted with the rules of poetry and painting ; for, as Cicero ^a says, *All men are capable of judging by the help of an inward sense, tho' unacquainted with rules, whether the productions of arts are good or bad, and whether the reasons they bear, be conclusive.*

Quintilian observes in a work ^b which we have often cited, tho' not so often as it deserves, *That 'tis not by reasoning we judge of works made to move and please. We judge by an inward motion, which we know not how to explain : At least those who have hitherto endeavoured to explain it, have miscarried in the attempt.*

The pit, without knowing the rules of dramatic poetry, forms as good a judgment of theatrical pieces, as those that belong to the profession. *The same thing happens,* says Abbot Aubignac, *with regard to the stage as with respect to eloquence ; the ignorant are as sensible of their perfections as the learned.*

^a *Omnis tacito quodam sensu sine ulla arte aut ratione, quæ sint in artibus ac rationibus prava aut recta, dijudicant.* CIC. de orat. l. 3.

^b *Non ratione aliqua, sed motu nescio an inenarrabili judicatur. Neque hoc ab ullo satis explicari puto, licet multi tentaverint.* QUINT. Inst. l. 6.

ed, tho' they are not so well informed of the reason of these perfections.

Hence it comes that eminent artists think proper sometimes to consult persons, who are strangers to the rules of their arts, but are capable nevertheless of giving their decisions with respect to the effect of a work composed for moving mankind ; because of their being endowed with a very sensible disposition. Such people as these decide frequently even before they speak, and without thinking of passing a decision. But as soon as the motions of their heart, which operates mechanically, are manifested by their gesture and countenance, they become, as it were, a touch-stone, which distinctly indicates, whether the principal merit of a work that is shewn or read to them, be wanting or not. Wherefore tho' these persons are incapable of contributing to the perfection of a work by their advice, or of giving even a methodical account of their sentiment, their decision nevertheless may be safely depended upon. There are several examples of what I have here advanced ; and 'tis well known that Malherbe and Moliere used to read their verses to their servant maids, to try *whether they would take*, to use the favorite expression of our dramatic poets.

But there are some beauties (it will be objected) in works of this kind, whose value must absolutely lye hid from the ignorant. For instance, a person who does not know, that the same Pharnaces who joined with the Romans against his father Mithridates, was ignominiously stript of his territories some years after by Julius Cæsar, is not struck with the beauty

beauty of these prophetic verses, which Racine puts into the mouth of Mithridates just as he is expiring.

Tôt ou tard il faudra que Pharnace périsse,

Fiez-vous aux Romains du soin de son supplice.

At length Pharnaces must receive his doom,

Th' avenging band impends, I see, from Rome.

Ignorant people cannot therefore judge of a poem in general, since they understand only a part of its beauties.

I intreat the reader not to forget the first answer I am going to make to this objection. 'Tis that I do not mean the lower class of people by the public capable of passing judgment on poems or pictures, or of deciding the measure of their excellence. The word *public* is applicable here to such persons only, as have acquired some lights, either by reading or by being conversant with the world. These are the only persons who are capable of ascertaining the rank of poems and pictures ; tho' in some excellent works one meets with beauties that are capable of making an impression upon the vulgar. But as they have no knowledge of any other works of the same kind, they are unqualify'd to determine the degree of excellence of a poem that commands their tears, or of fixing the rank it ought to have among other poems. The public therefore here in question, is limited to persons that read, and have a knowledge of theatrical entertainments, who see or hear people talk of pictures, and who have acquired by some means or other, that discernment, which is called the *Taste of Comparison*, whereof we shall presently have occasion to speak more at large. The reader, by attend-

ing to times and places, as well as to the nature of the work, which happens to be examined, will soon conceive much better than I am able to explain, to what stage of capacity, to what degree of knowledge, and to what situation or condition, the public here meant, ought to be restrained. For example, every one that is able to pass a sound judgment on a French tragedy, is not equally capable of forming a right opinion of the Æneid, or of any other Latin poem. The public capable of judging in our days with regard to the merit of Homer, is not near so numerous as the public that is able to judge of the Æneid. The public judgment is therefore restrained, according to the nature of the work in question. The word *public* is likewise limited more or less, according to the times and places spoken of. There are some ages and towns, where the necessary lights for judging properly of a work by its effect, are more generally diffused than in others. A particular rank of citizens, who have not the advantage of these lights in a country-town, have them in a metropolis. A rank that was deprived of them at the commencement of the sixteenth century, is favoured with them at the close of the seventeenth. For instance, since the establishing of operas, the number capable of giving their judgment on music, is considerably increased at Paris. But as I have already said, I am not afraid that my reader will be mistaken with regard to the extent, it will be proper to give the signification of the word *public*, pursuant to the occasions on which I shall employ it.

My second answer to the objection drawn from the verses of Mithridates, is, that the public does not finish in one day the trial of works that have real merit. Before verdict is given, they must lie some time, as it were, before the court. Now as soon as the merit of a work draws the public attention, those beauties which they cannot comprehend without the assistance of some explication, do not pass unobserved. This explication is soon handed about, and descends to the very lowest class, who account for them afterwards with the author, in giving a general definition of his work. Men have at least as strong a desire of telling what they know, as of learning what they know not. Besides, I do not imagine that the public would judge amiss of a work in general, were even some of these beauties to escape them. 'Tis not on beauties of this sort, that a sensible author, who writes in a modern language, grounds the success of his poem. The tragedies of Corneille and Racine do not contain four such strokes as that just now mentioned of Mithridates. If a piece is damned, we may venture to say, it would have met with the same fate, were every member of the public to have a thorough knowledge of those veiled beauties. Two or three passages which they overlooked, and which would have pleased them, if they had rightly understood their meaning, would not prevent their being tired with fifteen hundred others, which they understood to perfection.

As the chief aim of poetry and painting is to move and please us, every man who is not absolutely stupid, must feel the effect of good verses, and

fine pictures. All men ought to be in possession of a right of giving their suffrage, when the question to be decided is, whether poems or pictures produce their proper effect. Wherefore, when the affair in hand is to judge of the general effect of a work, the painter and poet have as little right to object against those who are unpractised in their art, as a surgeon would be intitled to refuse the testimony of a person who had undergone an operation, when the point in dispute is only to know whether the operation had been painful; merely under the pretext of the patient's ignorance in anatomy. What opinion should we have of a musician, were he to maintain, that such as do not understand music, are incapable of judging whether the minuet he has composed, be agreeable or not? When an orator sets his auditory a yawning and sleeping, is it not agreed upon, that he made a bad discourse, without examining whether the persons he set asleep, understood any thing of rhetoric. Men convinced by instinct, that the merit of an oration, as well as of a poem or a picture, must come within the reach of sense, give credit to the auditor's relation, and depend upon his decision, as soon as they know him to be a sensible person. Were even one of the spectators of a decried tragedy, to give a bad account of the reasons of its being tiresome to him, this would not hinder us from paying a deference to the general sense of the public. We should still continue to look upon it as a bad performance, tho' the reasons of its badness were ever so ill explained. We believe the man, tho' we do not comprehend his arguments.

What is it but the general sense, which decides that some colors are naturally gayer than others? Those who pretend to explain this truth by principles, advance nothing but what is very obscure, and beyond the reach of most capacities: And yet the thing itself is looked upon as certain all over the universe. It would be as ridiculous in the Indies, to maintain that black is a gay color, as it would be at Paris, to assert that a light green or pink were melancholy colors.

True it is, that with respect to the merit of pictures the public is not so competent a judge, as in relation to the merit of poems. The perfection of a great part of the beauties of a picture, for instance, that of the design, is not rightly perceptible but to painters, or *connoisseurs* who have studied painting as much as the artists themselves. But we shall inquire elsewhere, into the beauties of a picture that admit of the public for a competent judge, and those beauties that cannot be appraised to their just value, but by such as understand the rules of painting.



256 CRITICAL REFLECTIONS on
the way of discussion is not so proper for
C H A P. XXIII.
*That the way of discussion is not so proper for
distinguishing the merit of poems and pic-
tures, as that of sense.*

TH E more we advance in years, and improve in reason, the less credit we are apt to give to philosophical arguments, and the more confidence we have in sense and practice. Experience teaches us, that we are very seldom deceived by a distinct report of our senses, and that the habit of reasoning and judging from this report, leads us to a plain and sure practice; whereas we are deceived every day in philosophical operations, that is, in laying down general principles, and in drawing from thence a chain of conclusions. With respect to the arts, their principles are very numerous, and nothing is easier than to be mistaken in the choice of that which we are willing to state as the most important. May not this principle change, according to the kind of work we have a mind to apply to? We may give also a greater extent to a principle, than it ought naturally to have; and we are apt very often to esteem an unprecedented thing impossible. This is enough to throw us out of the right road, the very third syllogism: The fourth therefore becomes a sensible sophism, and the fifth contains a conclusion, whose falsity strikes even those who are incapable of making an analysis of the reasoning, and of tracing it to the very source of its error. In fine, whether it be that natural

philoso-

philosophers or critics state their principles wrong, or whether they do not infer their conclusions right, they find themselves mistaken every day, tho' they give the strongest assurances, that their method is an infallible guide to truth.

How many errors hath experience discovered in philosophical reasonings, which were held in past ages for solid arguments? As many as she will in future times discover in those reasonings, which are supposed in our days to be founded on uncontested truths. As we reproach the ancients for having believed the dreadful absurdity of a vacuum and the influence of the stars, our posterity will object some time or another against the like errors, which reason would attempt in vain to unfold, but experience and time will soon be capable of detecting.

The two most illustrious philosophical assemblies in Europe, the Academy of sciences at Paris, and the Royal society at London, have not thought proper to adopt, or build any general system of physics. By conforming to the opinion of chancellor Bacon, they adhere to no system, lest the desire of justifying it, should bewitch the eyes of the observers, and make them see the experiments, not as they really are, but as they ought to be in order to add weight to an opinion which they have attempted to spread for true. These two famous academies are therefore satisfied with verifying the facts and inserting them in their registers, convinced that nothing is easier for our reason than to stumble, as soon as it attempts to go two paces beyond the point, to which it has been conducted by experience. 'Tis therefore from the hands of

expe-

experience that these societies expect a general system. What shall we think of those systems of poetic rules, which, so far from being grounded on experience, attempt point-blank to contradict it, and pretend to demonstrate to us, that works admired by all who have been capable of understanding them these two thousand years, are very far from deserving admiration?

The more we know ourselves and the rest of mankind, the less, as I have already observed, we confide in speculative decisions, even in matters that in rigor are susceptible of geometrical demonstration. M. Leibnitz would never venture to let his coachman drive thro' a place where the fellow even when fasting assures him, that he must absolutely be overturned; tho' a mathematician had demonstrated to that learned man, by a geometrical analysis of the declivity and height of the way, as also by the weight of the vehicle, that the thing could not happen. We are apt to believe our own common sense preferable to philosophy, because the latter is easier imposed upon than the former.

If there is an art that depends on philosophical speculation, 'tis that of navigation. Let us ask our navigators, whether the old pilots, whose whole knowledge consists in experience, and in what little they have learnt by rote, do not give a better guess in a long voyage, what place or latitude the ship actually steers her course in, than your fresh-water mathematicians, tho' the latter have studied for ten years together, all the auxiliary sciences to the art of navigation. They will answer, that they never saw these

these mathematicians set pilots right with regard to the estimation, except in their printed relations ; on which occasion they may very well alledge the answer of the lion in the fable, who was desired to take notice of a Low-relieve, where a man had flung a lion on the ground ; to which he replied that lions had no sculptors.

When archduke Albert undertook the famous siege of Ostend, he sent for Pompey Targon, the greatest mathematician of his time, but without experience, to make him his principal engineer. But Pompey Targon was very far from answering the archduke's expectation. Not one of his machines succeeded, and they were obliged to dismiss him, after he had caused an immense expence and effusion of blood to very little purpose. They gave the direction of the siege afterwards to the famous Ambrose Spinola, who had only genius and experience, which however succeeded. This great general had never studied any of those sciences that are requisite to form an engineer, when he took a disgust at seeing another noble Genoese preferred to him in the purchase of the palace Turfi at Genoa. This set him upon going into the army in the Spanish Netherlands, at a very advanced period of life, in comparison to the age in which people generally make their apprenticeship in the art of war.

When the great prince Condé laid siege to Thionville after the battle of Rocroi^a, he sent for Roberval, the most knowing person in the mathematics at that time, and who died royal professor in this science, as a person capable of advising him with re-

spect to the siege he was going to form. Roberval proposed nothing that was practicable; wherefore they were obliged to send him to Metz, to wait there till other engineers had taken the place. 'Tis plain from Boccalini's books, that he was acquainted with the most ingenious observations the ancients and moderns have left us, on the great art of governing. Pope Paul V, from the notion he had of his fame and abilities, intrusted him with the government of a small town, which a man that did not understand a word of Latin might very well know how to manage. The pontif was obliged after three months administration, to recall the celebrated author of the political commentaries upon Tacitus, and of the famous book intitled the *Touchstone*.

A physician at twenty five years of age, is as well persuaded of the truth of the physical reasonings, which pretend to unfold the manner of the operating of the bark in the cure of intermitting fevers, as he may be of the efficacy of the remedy. A physician at sixty is convinced of the truth of the fact which he has seen several times; but he gives no manner of credit to the explications of the effect of the remedy. Is it the knowledge in simples, and skill in anatomy, or is it the experience of a physician, that determines a person who has some experience himself, in the choice of his physician? Charles II. king of England used to say, that of all the Frenchmen that ever he knew, Monsieur Gourville was the man of the best sense. This Gentleman wanted a physician; and the most celebrated members of the faculty made interest to be admitted

ted to assist him in that capacity. Without minding their recommendations he sent a trusty servant to the door of the college one day when the faculty was assembled, with orders to bring him, without any further inquiry, the physician whose complexion he should judge to be most like to that of his master. The servant in conformity to his orders, brought him just such a man as he wanted, and the scheme answered his expectation. Monsieur Gourville's determination was in favor of experience, which with respect to him was still more deserving of that appellation.

The late Monsieur de Tournefort, one of the worthiest members of the academy of sciences, says, with respect to a difficult pass, which he got over^a, *For my part, I abandoned myself intirely to the guidance of my horse, and found it answered better than if I had strove to manage him myself. An automaton that follows naturally the laws of mechanics, conducts itself much better on these occasions, than the most knowing person in mechanics, who should attempt to practise the rules he has learnt in his cabinet, were he even a member of the academy of sciences.* Observe, 'tis the experience of a horse, that is, of a machine in the opinion of this author, which is preferred here to the reasonings of an academic. This horse (give me leave to joke a little) carries us a great way. Tho' the counsellors are generally more learned than the judges, yet 'tis very common for the former to be mistaken in the conjectures they form of the issue of a law-suit. The judges who have read only a small number of books, but whose daily experience ac-

^a Voyage to the Levant, lett. II.

quaints them with the motives that determine the tribunals in the trial of a process, are very seldom mistaken in their predictions with respect to the event of a cause.

Now if there is any subject, in which reason ought to be silent when opposed to experience, 'tis certainly in those questions which may be raised concerning the merit of a poem... 'Tis when we want to know, whether a poem pleases or not; whether, generally speaking, it be an excellent or indifferent performance. The general principles we go upon, in reasoning consistently with respect to the merit of a poem, are exceeding few. There is sometimes room for exception against a principle that seems the most universal; and a great many of them are so vague, that one may maintain with equal probability, that the poet has either observed or swerved from them. The importance of those principles depends also on an infinite number of circumstances of times and places in which the poet has wrote. In short, as the principal aim of poetry is to please, 'tis obvious that its principles are oftner arbitrary than those of other arts, because of the various tastes of those for whom the poet composes. Tho' the beauties of the art of rhetoric ought to be much less arbitrary than those of poetry, nevertheless Quintilian^a says, *that it has never submitted but to a very small number of those principles and rules, which are called general*

• Propter quæ mihi semper moris fuit quam miminè alligare me ad præcepta quæ καθολικὰ vocantur, id est, ut dicamus quomodo possumus, universalia vel perpetua. Raro enim reperitur hoc genus, ut non labefactari parte aliqua aut subrui possit. QUINT.
Inst. I. 2. c. 14.

and universal ; for there are hardly any of them whose validity is not contested for very good reasons.

Tis therefore almost impossible to set a just value upon what may result from the happy irregularities of a poet, as likewise from his attention to certain principles, and his negligence in deviating from others. In fine, what a vast number of faults are generally forgiven because of the beauty of his style ? Another thing to be observed is, that after having reasoned and concluded well for ourselves, we should be liable to draw a bad conclusion for others, who might happen to be exactly the very persons, for whom the poet composed his work. Would a geometrical estimation of the merit of Ariosto made by a Frenchman in our days, be of any weight with the Italians of the sixteenth century ? Would the rank which a French writer of dissertations should chance to give Ariosto in consequence of a poetic analysis of his poem, be acknowledged to be that which is due to *Messer Lodovico* ? What a vast number of calculations and combinations a person must make before he is capable of drawing a just consequence ! A great volume *in folio* would be scarce sufficient to contain the exact analysis of Racine's Phædra according to this method, and to estimate this piece by way of examen. The discussion would be as much liable to error, as it would be tiresome to the writer, and disagreeable to the reader. That which the analysis in vain attempts to find, is immediately discovered by our sense.

The sense here spoken of, is in all men; but as they have not eyes and ears of equal goodness, so their sense is not equally perfect. Some have it better than others, either because their organs are naturally better composed, or because they have improved it by frequent use and experience. Such as these ought naturally to discern sooner than others the merit or insignificancy of a work. 'Tis thus a person, that is clear-sighted, discovers people distinctly a hundred yards off, when those who are just close to him, can hardly discern the color of men's dress that are approaching towards them. Were we to be directed by our first motion, we should judge of the extent of other men's senses by our own. It happens therefore, that short-sighted folks hesitate sometimes before they acquiesce to the sense of one that sees better than themselves; but as soon as the person who is moving forward, comes within a proportionable distance, they are all of one opinion.

In like manner all that judge by sense, agree at last with respect to the effect and merit of a work. If a conformity of opinion be not established amongst them so soon as it ought, 'tis because men, in giving their opinion with respect to a poem or a picture, do not confine themselves always to say what they think, and to relate sincerely the impression it makes upon them. Instead of speaking simply and according to their own *apprehension*, the merit of which they are frequently unacquainted with, they attempt to decide by principles; and as the greatest part are incapable of explaining

ing themselves methodically, they perplex their decisions, and disturb one another in their judgments. A little time reconciles them again to themselves, as well as to one another.

C H A P. XXIV.

Objection against the solidity of the public judgments, and answer to this objection.

I BEGIN already, methinks, to hear a long citation of errors, into which the public in all ages and countries have fallen with regard to the merit of those who have been invested with high dignities, or have exercised particular professions. How can you pretend (some will say) to make us imagine there is any infallibility in an *appraiser* of merit, that has been so often mistaken with regard to generals, ministers, and magistrates, and so often obliged to retract his judgment?

I shall make two replies to this objection, which in reality is more imposing than solid. In the first place, the public is seldom mistaken, in defining in general the abovementioned persons as an example of injustice, tho' it may commend or blame them unreasonably sometimes with regard to a particular event. Let us explain this proposition. The public does not judge of the merit of a general from a single campaign, nor of that of a minister from one sole negotiation, nor of a physician from the treatment of a single distemper. Its judgment

is formed from several events and successes. Now as unjust as it would be to judge of the merit of the persons here mentioned from one single success ; so reasonable, methinks, it is to form a judgment of them from repeated successes, as well as by comparing them to those of persons who have had the management of affairs of the like nature.

A single lucky success, or even two, may be the effect of the power of conjunctures. 'Tis rare that luck alone can produce three happy events ; but when these successes amount to a certain number, it would be madness to pretend they are merely the effect of hazard, and that the ability of the general or minister is not at all concerned in them. The same may be said with regard to unlucky adventures. A player of trick-track, who out of twenty games with the same person wins nineteen, is always supposed to understand the game better than his adversary, tho' the caprice of the dice may make a bad player win two games running of a very good one. Now war and those other professions depend much less on fortune than trick-track, tho' fortune has some share in the success of those who profess it. The plan a general lays, after having examined his forces, his resources, and in short the means that are in the enemy's or in his own power, is not exposed so often to be disconcerted as the project of a gamester. Wherefore the public is in the right to think, that a general who is constantly successful in his campaigns, understands the art of war ; tho' a general may have a lucky event without merit, as he may lose a battle or be obliged to raise a siege, without being unskilful in his profession.

Cardinal
Mazarin

Mazarin understood as well as any man, what share capacity hath in events, which weak people imagine to depend almost intirely on chance, because they depend in part. For this reason he never confided either armies or negotiations to any but lucky persons, upon a supposition that one cannot succeed often enough to merit the title of fortunate, without having great abilities. Now the public seldom retracts the general judgments it has passed on the merit of generals and ministers, in the manner here explained.

My second answer is, that it would be wrong to conclude, the public may be mistaken with regard to a poem, or picture, because it often praises or condemns ministers and generals unreasonably with respect to particular events. The public is never mistaken, for instance, with regard to the praise or blame due to a general after winning or losing a battle, but for passing its judgment on an intire object, whereof it understood only a part. When it is in the wrong, 'tis for having censured or commended, before it had been rightly instructed in the parts which the general had in the good or bad success. The thing is, the public would fain judge, while it is misinformed with respect to the facts. It has passed its judgment on the general, before it was rightly instructed either concerning the constraint he lay under from the orders of his prince or his republic, or with respect to the crosses he met with from those whose busines it was to assist him, or in regard to his being disappointed of his promised succours. The public does not know, whether he has not brought on the hazard which seems to have been

the only cause of his success, either by pressing the enemy close, or by giving him some occasion of falling into a presumptuous confidence; and whether the benefit he draws from this hazard, be not due to the precautions he had taken beforehand to improve it to his advantage. It cannot tell, whether the general could remove, or at least whether he ought to have foreseen the unlucky accident which disappointed his enterprize, and has given it even an appearance of temerity, after it proved abortive. The same may be said of the public, when it commends or censures the minister, the magistrate, and even the physician, with regard to a particular event.

But the case is otherwise in praising painters or poets, because these are never happy or unhappy with respect to the success of their productions, but in proportion to their merit. When the public decides of their works, its judgment is directed towards an object, which it knows and sees in all and every part. All the beauties and imperfections of these sorts of works are laid open, and nothing that can render them worthy of blame or praise is concealed, but is known as much as is necessary for forming a right judgment. A prince who has given his commission to a general, or his instruction to a minister, is not as capable of judging of their conduct, as the public is of judging of poems and pictures.

Painters and poets (some will continue to object) are at least the unhappiest of all those whose works are exposed to the eyes of the public. For every body has a right to arraign them, even without giving

any

any reason for so doing ; whereas the learned in other arts or sciences are *judged only by their peers*, who are likewise obliged to convict them in form before they are intitled to proceed to sentence.

I do not imagine it would be any great advantage for painters and poets, to be judged only by their peers. But let us answer more seriously. When a work treats of sciences or subjects that are merely speculative, its merit is not discernible to the sense. People therefore that have acquired a necessary knowledge for distinguishing whether a work be good or bad, are the only persons that are capable of judging. Men are not born with a knowledge of astronomy and physics, as with a sensitive faculty. They cannot therefore judge of the merit of a physical or astronomical piece, but by virtue of their acquired knowledge ; whereas they are able to form a judgment of verses and pictures in consequence of their natural discernment. Wherefore geometers, physicians, and divines, or those who without hanging out a sign of these sciences, are nevertheless well acquainted with them, are the only persons capable of judging of a work that treats of their respective sciences. But every man may judge of verses and pictures, because every man has a natural sensibility, and the effect of verses and pictures falls under the sense.

Tho' this answer is irrefragable, yet I shall still corroborate it with another reflection. As soon as the sciences abovementioned have operated by virtue of their principles, and produced something that must be useful or agreeable to mankind in general, we can tell then without any other light but

what comes from the sensitive faculty, whether the learned author has succeeded. People ignorant in astronomy know as well as the learned, whether the astronomer has foretold an eclipse precisely, or whether the machine produces the effect promised by the mathematician, tho' they can alledge no methodical proof, that the astronomer and mathematician are in the wrong, nor are capable of telling in what they have been mistaken.

If there be any such thing as arts, that fall under the sense, painting and poetry must certainly be of this number, since their operation is designed intirely to move us. The sole exception that can be made, is, that there are some pictures and poems, whose intire merit does not fall under the sense. We cannot determine by a sensitive assistance, whether truth be observed in an historical picture, representing the siege of a place, or the ceremony of a consecration. Our senses alone cannot inform us, whether the author of a philosophical poem reasons justly, and proves his system with solidity.

Our senses, I allow, cannot judge of that part of the merit of a poem or picture, which may be distinguished by the name of its extrinsecal merit; but this is because the arts of poetry and painting themselves are incapable of deciding of it. In this respect painters and poets have no manner of advantage over the rest of mankind. If any of these artists are capable of deciding with regard to what we have called extrinsecal merit in poems and pictures, 'tis because they have the advantage of some other knowledge, besides what they have received from the arts of poetry and painting.

When

When there happens to be a dispute concerning one of those mixt pieces, which fall within the inspection of different tribunals, each of them decides the question belonging to its jurisdiction. This gives rise sometimes to opposite tho' just sentiments concerning the merit of the same work. Thus poets very justly commend Lucretius's poem on the universe, as the production of an eminent artist; when philosophers condemn it as a book stuffed with false reasonings. 'Tis thus also historians blame Varillas, because of the mistakes he commits in almost every page; whilst those who seek for amusement only, commend him for his entertaining narratives, and for the graces of his style.

But to return to Lucretius, the public is as much a judge of that part of the merit of his poem which belongs to the jurisdiction of poetry, as the poets themselves. All this portion of the merit of Lucretius falls under the sense:

The true method therefore of distinguishing the merit of a poem, will be always to consult the impression it makes. Our age is too knowing, or, if you please, too philosophical, to believe we must learn of critics, what we are to think of a work composed to move us, when we can read this work ourselves, and there are multitudes that have actually read it. Philosophy, which teaches us to judge of things by their proper principles, informs us at the same time, that in order to know the merit and excellence of a poem, we must examine whether and how far it pleases and engages its readers.

True it is, that persons who are unacquainted with the art, are incapable of ascending as high as the

the causes, which render us tired with a bad poem, or of pointing out their particular faults. Wherefore I am far from pretending, that an ignorant person can tell precisely what the painter or poet has failed in, and much less advise them with respect to the correction of each error; but this does not debar him from judging by the impression made by a work composed on purpose to please and engage him, whether and how far the author has succeeded in his enterprize. An ignorant person can therefore affirm, that a work is good or bad; and 'tis even false that he gives no reason for his judgment. The tragic writer, he will say, has not made him weep, nor the comic poet laugh. He alleges, that he feels no pleasure in gazing at a picture, for which he has no value or esteem. 'Tis the business of the works themselves to make their defence against such criticisms, and whatsoever an author may chance to say in order to excuse the weak parts of his poem, has no more effect, than the studied encomiums which his friends bestow on the beautiful passages. Scuderi's *tyrannical love* is ranked amongst the bad performances, notwithstanding Sarrazin's dissertation in its favor. In fact, all the critical arguments in the world are incapable of persuading people that a work pleases, when they feel it does not; or that a work engages them, when they experience the contrary.

C H A P. XXV.

Of the judgment of artists.

AFTER having spoken of the public judgment with respect to a new work, 'tis proper we treat of such judgments as are passed by the artists themselves. The greatest part of these gentlemen are apt to judge wrong of works considered in general; for which there can be three reasons alledged. The first is, that the sensibility of artists is blunted: The second, they judge of every thing by way of discussion: The third, in fine, they are prevented in favor of some part of the art, and in the general judgments they make, they set a greater value upon it, than it deserves. Under the name of artists I include here, not only poets and painters, but likewise a great number of such as write concerning poems and pictures. What! (some will say) the more ignorant therefore a person is in poetry and painting, the more capable he is of giving a solid judgment of these arts, Strange paradox! The explication I am going to give of my proposition, joined to what has been already said, will be a sufficient reply to an objection so proper for prejudicing the world against my opinion. There are some artists much more capable than the generality of mankind, of passing judgment on the performances of their art. These are such as are born with a genius which is always accompanied with

with a more exquisite sense, than that of the common run of mankind. But the number of these is very inconsiderable ; and as for those without genius, I affirm that their judgments are less solid than those of the generality of people, or, if you will, of the vulgar. I am induced to think thus for the following reasons. The sensibility of an artist without genius wears off in time, and what little he learns by his practice, contributes only to deprave his natural taste, and incline him to the wrong side in his decisions. His sense has been blunted by the necessity of occupying himself with verses and painting, especially as he must have been frequently obliged to write and paint, as it were, against his will, in particular moments when he felt no inclination for his work. He is become therefore insensible to the pathetic of verses and pictures, which have no longer the same effect upon him, as they formerly had, and still have on men of his age.

'Tis thus an old physician, tho' born of a tender and compassionate disposition, is no longer moved as much as another man with the sight of a dying person, or as much as he would have been affected himself, if he had not practised physic. The surgeon is hardened in the very same manner, and acquires a habit of dissecting those wretches without repugnance, whose kind of death renders their bodies a stronger object of horror. The most doleful ceremonies make no impression on such, as by profession are obliged to assist at them. The heart grows *callous* in the same manner as the hands and feet ; as Cicero very ingeniously

ingeniously expresses himself in giving a lively picture of the indolence of the republic.

Besides, painters and poets look upon imitations as labor, whereas others consider them as interesting objects. Wherefore the subject of imitation, that is, the events of the tragedy, and the expressions of the picture, make a very superficial impression upon painters and poets without genius, such as are here considered. They are accustomed to so feeble an emotion, that they hardly perceive whether a work moves them or not. Their attention is intirely fixt on the mechanic execution, from whence they form a judgment of the whole. The poetry of Coypel's picture representing the sacrifice of Jephtha's daughter, does not strike them, and they examine it with as much indifference, as if it exhibited a rustic dance, or some other subject incapable of moving us : Insensible of the pathetic of his expressions, they arraign him only by consulting their rule and compass, just as if a picture ought not to contain beauties superior to the decision of those instruments.

'Tis thus the greatest part of our poets would examine the Cid, if this piece were new. Painters and poets who have no enthusiasm do not feel that of others, and giving their suffrage by way of discussion, they commend or censure a work in general, and define it to be good or bad, according as they find it regular in their analysis. How can they be good judges of the whole, when they are bad ones of the invention, a part which constitutes the principal merit of works, and distinguishes the great genius from the simple artist ?

Wherfore

Artists therefore judge ill in general, tho' their reasonings particularly examined prove tolerably just; but they apply them to a use for which they were never intended. To pretend to judge of a poem or of a picture in general by the way of discussion, is to attempt to measure a circle with a rule: You should take a pair of compasses, which is the proper instrument for measuring it.

In fact, we see folks mistaken every day, in predicting the success of a dramatic piece, by reason of their having formed their prognostics by way of discussion; who would form very solid judgments, were they directed by their sense. Racine and Boileau were of the number of those artists, who are much better qualify'd than other men to judge of verses and poems. Who would imagine, but that after haying conferred and communicated their thoughts with one another, their judgments must have been infallible at least with respect to each scene considered in particular? And yet Boileau has acknowledged, that the judgments which his friend and he frequently passed after a methodical discussion on the different success, which should have attended the several scenes of his friend's tragedies, happened frequently to be contradicted by the event; and that they had both of them been constantly convinced by experience, that the public was always right in passing a different judgment. Both of them, in order to be better able to judge of the effect of their verses, made use of the same method pretty near as that of Malherbe and Moliere. We took notice, that artists are likewise apt to fall into another error, in forming their decision.

cision. 'Tis their having too great a regard in the estimation of the work, for the capacity of the artist in that part of the art, in favor of which they are prevented. The fate of artists without genius, is to apply themselves principally to the study of a part of the art they profess, and to imagine, after having made some progress therein, that 'tis the only important branch. The poet, whose principal talent consists in his facility of rhyming, soon imbibes the prejudiced notion, that a poem with a neglected versification must of necessity be an indifferent piece; tho' it be rich in invention, and abounds with thoughts so suitable to the subject, that one is surprized at their being new. As his talent does not lye in invention, these beauties have but very little weight in his scales. A painter, who of all those talents so necessary to form the great artist, has only that of coloring, decides of the excellence or badness of a picture, in proportion to the artist's abilities in managing the colors. The poetry of the picture passes for little or nothing in his judgment, which is made without any regard to such parts of the art as he is not master of. A poetic painter will fall into the same error, by setting a very low value upon a picture, that should happen to be defective in the ordonnance, and mean in the expref-
sions; tho' the coloring may deserve to be admired. By supposing that those parts of the art we are deficient in, are scarce worthy of notice, we maintain, without mentioning it directly, that we want nothing to make us eminent in our profession. One may apply to artists what Petronius says of men who abound

abound in riches. ^a Men are all desirous, that whatever qualification they have themselves should be the greatest merit in society. The reader will please to observe, that what I have hitherto said has been in regard only to the general judgments by which artists determine the merit of a work. That painters are more capable than others, of judging of the merit of a picture with respect to the coloring, the regularity of the design, and some other beauties in the execution, is what no body attempts to question, and what we shall take notice of ourselves in the twenty seventh chapter of this work.

'Tis manifest that I have spoken here in respect to such painters and poets only, as are honestly mistaken. Had I studied to render their decisions suspected, what might not I say concerning the injustices they daily and purposely commit, in characterising the works of their competitors? In other professions men are generally satisfied with being the most eminent among their cotemporaries: but in poetry and painting one can hardly suffer the shadow of a rival. Cæsar was contented to have an equal, but most poets and painters, proud and haughty like Pompey ^b, cannot so much as bear the thoughts of being approached. They are willing there should be a great distance in the eyes of the public, between themselves and such of their cotemporaries as seem to

^a *Nihil volunt inter homines melius credi, quam quod ipsi tenent.*
PETRON. Satyr.

^b *Nam neque Pompeius parem animo quemquam tulit, & in quibus rebus primus esse debebat, solus esse cupiebat.* PATERC, hist. l. 2. tread

tread nearest their footsteps. 'Tis therefore very rare, that the principal men in these two professions condescend to do justice even to such of their cotemporaries, as are only just beginning their career, and who cannot of course be put upon a level with them, but in a future and very remote time. One has occasion frequently to reproach the great men here spoken of, with that touch of self-love, which Augustus was accused of: that is, with having chosen in the person of Tiberius, the properest successor to make him regretted. If great artists are so sensible of jealousy, what must we think of the indifferent ones?

C H A P. XXIV.

That the public judgments prevail at length over the decisions of artists.

WHAT has been above evinced by reason, is sufficiently confirmed by experience. Artists must certainly be often mistaken, since their decisions are commonly reversed by the public, on whose voice the fate of works has always depended. The public opinion carries it, when it happens to differ even with the most eminent artists, in respect to the merit of a new production. 'Tis to no purpose, says Boileau^a, for a work to be approved by a small number of connoisseurs; unless it has some attractive proper for exciting the general taste of mankind, it will never be able to pass

^a Preface to the edition of 1701.

for a good performance, and the connoisseurs themselves will be obliged to own, that they were mistaken in giving their approbation. The same thing happens, when the public gives its approbation to a work condemned by the connoisseurs. As the public will judge hereafter by their senses, in the same manner as those before them have judged, they will consequently be of one opinion. Posterity has never censured those poems which the contemporaries of the author commended as excellent, tho' they may neglect to read them, in order to amuse themselves with better performances. On the other hand there is no instance of poems having been unacceptable to the contemporaries of their author, and attaining in future times to any degree of reputation. *Posterity, says a Roman writer, ^a will believe as much, as the present age will warrant to be true.*

Party writings, and poems on recent events, have but a very short-liv'd fame, if they be indebted for their whole success to the conjuncures in which they are published. They are generally forgotten, in six months, by reason that they are not considered so much in the light of poems, as in that of gazettes. 'Tis not at all surprizing, they should be ranked hereafter among those satyrical memoirs, which are curious only with respect to the facts of which they inform us, or in regard to the circumstances of those facts which they recal to our memory: The public had condemned them to this very fate six months after their birth. But those poems, and party-writings, which are esteemed

^a *Tantumdem quoque posteri credunt, quantum praesens actas spoponderit.* CURTIUS, lib. 8.

a year after their first appearance; and without any respect to circumstances, are transmitted with the same esteem to posterity. We set as great a value on Seneca's satyre against the emperor Claudius, as they could have done at Rome two years after the death of that prince. We have as great a regard for the Satyra Menippea, the provincial letters, and some other books of that kind, as they had a year after the first édition of those writings. Those songs which were composed ten years ago, and are still retained, will be likewise sung by our posterity.

The faults which artists affect to observe in works esteemed by the public, may retard indeed, but not obstruct their success. One may answer them, that a poem or a picture may be an excellent work, notwithstanding its badness in some parts. It would be unnecessary to explain here to the reader, that throughout this whole dissertation the word *bad* must be understood in a relative signification. 'Tis plain, for example, that when 'tis said, the coloring of a picture of the Roman school is good for nothing, this expression imports only that this coloring is inferior to that of several other pictures, whether Flemish or Lombard, whose reputation is notwithstanding very indifferent. We should not feel the force of the expressions of a picture, if the coloring were absolutely false and bad. When we say that Corneille's versification is bad in some places, we mean only that 'tis more neglected, than that of several poets, who are esteemed indifferent artists. Were the versification to be absolutely bad, and to offend us at every line, the poem

would never be able to move us. For, as Quintilian observes^a, *Phrases that set out by offending the ear with their roughness, and usher themselves in, as it were, with a bad address, find the entrance into our hearts obstructed.*

The decisions of artists, notwithstanding their being subject to all the illusions here mentioned, have a great share nevertheless in the first reputation of a new work. In the first place, tho' they have not influence enough to get a poem or picture condemned by those that know them; yet they may hinder a great many from having any knowledge of them, by dissuading them from going to see, or read them. These prejudices, which spread, have an effect for some time. In the second place, the public prejudiced in favor of the discernment of artists, imagine for some time that they have more penetration and sagacity than themselves. Wherefore as the work, to which they are willing to do justice, attains quickly to the good or bad reputation due to it; so the reverse falls out when they refuse doing justice to it, either thro' prevarication, or mistake. But when they are divided in their sentiments, they invalidate their credit, and the public judges of course without them. 'Tis by the help of this division that Moliere and Racine attained quickly to so high a degree of reputation.

Tho' the artists cannot impose on others, so as to make them take excellent things for bad, yet they can make them believe that those excellent things are but indifferent with respect to

^a *Nihil intrare potest in affectum, quod in aure velut quodam vestibulo statim offendit.* QUINT. Inst. l. 9. cap. 4.

others.

others. The error into which they throw the public by this means, with respect to a new performance, is a long while a removing. Till the work becomes generally known, the prejudice which the decision of the artists has caused in the world, balances the sentiment of judicious and disinterested persons, especially if it be from the hands of an author whose reputation is not yet established. If the author be known already for an excellent artist, his work is sooner rescued from oppression. Whilst one prejudice combats against another, truth escapes, as it were, from their hands, and shews itself.

The most part of the prejudices which painters and poets spread against a new work, proceeds from this, that those who speak of a poem or of a picture on the credit of others, chuse to take and repeat the opinions of artists, rather than to relate the sentiments of such as have not hung out their signs, as it were, in the profession to which the work belongs. In these kinds of things, in which men do not think they have an essential interest to determine them to the right side of the question, they let themselves be imposed upon by an argument which has a very great weight with them. This is, that the artists ought to have more experience than others. I say, imposed upon; for, as I have shewn already, most painters and poets do not judge by their senses, nor by paying a deference to their natural taste improved by comparisons and experience; but by way of analysis. They do not judge like men endowed with the sixth sense abovementioned, but as speculative philosophers. Vanity contributes also

to make us espouse the opinion of artists, preferable to that of men of taste and sense. To embrace the sentiment of a person who has no more experience than ourselves, is acknowledging in some measure that he is a man of better sense and understanding. This is paying a kind of homage to his natural discernment. But to believe the artist, and to pay a deference to the opinion of a man who is of a profession which we are not so well acquainted with, is only shewing a respect to the art and paying homage to experience. The profession of the art imposes on a great many in such a manner, that they stifle at least for some time their own sentiment; being ashamed, as Quintilian^a observes, to differ with others in opinion. We listen therefore with pleasure to artists, who enter into a methodical examination of a tragedy, or picture, and we strive even to retain as much as we can of the very technical terms: but this is in order to gain the admiration and attention of others in repeating them.

^a *Pudet enim diffentire, & quasi tacita verecundia inhibemur plus nobis credere.* QUINT. I. 10. cap. 1.



C H A P. XXVII.

That there is a greater regard due to the judgments of painters, than to those of poets. Of the art of discovering the hand of painters.

THE public seems to have more attention to painters who are employed in examining a picture, than to poets taken up in criticising a poem: in which respect we cannot help commending their judgment. The generality of men are very far from having so much knowledge of the mechanic part of painting, as that of poetry; and, as we have shewn in the beginning of these essays, the beauties of execution are much more considerable in a picture, than they possibly can be in a French poem. We have even seen that the beauties of execution alone are capable of rendering a picture valuable. Now these beauties make a sensible impression upon men, who do not understand the mechanic part of painting; and yet they are not capable to judge of the merit of a painter. To be able to judge of the commendation due to him, one should know how near he has approached to those artists, who are most extolled for having excelled in the parts, in which he has succeeded. These are some of the degrees more or less, which form the difference between a great and an ordinary artist: And this is what the artists are judges of. Wherefore the reputation of a painter, whose talent consists in the chiaro-scuro, or in the local colors, depends much more on

the judgment of his peers, than the fame of a person, whose merit consists in the expression of the passions and in poetic inventions; things which the public understands, compares, and judges of itself. We observe also by the history of painters, that the colorists have not attained so early to so great degree of reputation, as painters famous for their poetry and design.

'Tis obvious, that in pursuance of this principle, I must acknowledge the artists are the proper judges, when we want to know, as near as possible, who drew the picture; but they are not for all this the only judges of the merit of the piece. As the greatest artists have sometimes drawn very indifferently, we cannot infer the excellence of the picture from the knowledge we have of the author. It does not follow of course that it is a first rate piece, from its being undoubtedly the production of one of the most celebrated painters.

Tho' experience informs us, that the art of guessing at the author of a picture, from the knowledge we have of the master's hand, is the most fallible of all arts next to physic, it prejudices nevertheless the public in favor of the decisions of those that practise it, even when they are made on other points. Men who are more ready to admire than to approve, hear with submission, and repeat with confidence, the judgments of a person who affects a distinct knowledge of several things which they do not understand. We shall see, from what I am going to say concerning the infallibility of the art of discerning the hands of great masters, what bounds ought to be set to the natural prevention

prevention we have in favor of such judgments as are given by the professors of this art, and who decide with as much assurance as a young physician writes a prescription.

Those that are expert in the art of distinguishing the hand of great masters, are not well agreed among themselves, but with respect to such famous pictures, as have already established, as it were, their credit, and made their history known to the world. With regard to pictures whose fame is not yet fixt by a constant and uninterrupted tradition, there are none but our own and those of our friends, that have the names of their authors ascertained. As for the pictures in possession of other persons, and especially of fellow-citizens, they are doubtful originals. Some of these are objected against for being only copies, and others *pasticci*. Interest completes the uncertainty in the decision of an art, which is subject to mistakes, even when it proceeds ingenuously.

'Tis well known, that several painters have been mistaken with regard to their own works, and that they have frequently taken a copy for the very original they themselves had painted. Vasari relates as an ocular witness, that Julio Romano, after having drawn the drapery of a picture done by Raphael, mistook a copy of this picture done by Andrea del Sarto for the very original. In fact, tho' it ought to be easier at present to distinguish a man's pen than his pencil; yet those who are skilled in writing, are daily mistaken, and divided in their judgments.

The particular shape of the stroke, by which every man forms the four and twenty letters of
the

the alphabet; the connections of these characters, the figure and distance of the lines, the greater or lesser perseverance of the person that writes, in not precipitating, as it were, his pen in the heat of his motion, as most penmen do, who form the characters of the first lines better than those of the next; in fine, the manner in which he has held his pen; all this, I say, enables us better to distinguish people's hand-writing, than the strokes of a pencil qualify us to discern the hand of a painter. As writing flows from a rapid and continued movement of all the muscles of the hand, it depends intirely on their conformation and habit. A strained character is immediately suspected of being counterfeited, and we soon distinguish whether it be drawn with ease and freedom.

We cannot discern so well, whether the strokes drawn by a pencil are studied, or whether the copier has retouched and mended his stroke to give it a greater likeness to the natural touch of another painter. A person is as much master in painting to lick over his stroke several times, in order to give it its proper finishing, as the ancients were to mend their character, when they used to write on wax writing-tables. Now the ancients were so far convinced, that one might counterfeit another man's hand in his writing-tables, because the characters might be retouched without being discerned, that no public deed was esteemed valid unless the parties concerned set their seals to the contract. The perfection the ancients attained to in engraving stones for seals, was owing to the care they had in making particular seals, such as could not easily be counterfeited. This care they

they had of having each a different seal, is the cause of our finding at present such whimsical figures, and frequently the head of the owner of the seal, on the antique engraved stones.

But notwithstanding all the methods we have of discerning men's hand-writing, this art is still so very fallible, that those nations which are more careful in protecting the innocent than in punishing the guilty, forbid their courts to admit the proof of hand-writing in criminal causes: and in countries where this proof is received, the judges consider it rather as a probable circumstance, than as a complete evidence. What shall we therefore think of the art, which boldly supposes it cannot be deceived by any counterfeit strokes in imitation of those of Raphael or Poussin?

C H A P. XXVII.

Of the time when poems and pictures are appraised to their full value.

THE time at length comes, when the public appraises a work no longer by the relation of artists, but according to the impression made by the work itself: Those who had judged differently from the professors of the art, by referring things to the decision of their senses, communicate their opinions to one another, and the uniformity of their sensation changes the opinion of every particular person into a persuasion. New masters rise up in the art, who form a just and disinterested judgment of injured works; and undeceive the world

metho-

methodically with regard to the prejudices sown by their predecessors. People of themselves observe, that those who promised them something better than the work whose merit had been contested, have not kept their word. On the other hand its professed enemies drop off; by which means it is rated at length to its full value.

Such has been amongst us the fate of the operas of Quinault. It was impossible to persuade the public, that they were not moved with the representations of Theseus and Athys; but they were made to believe, that these pieces were full of gross errors, which did not proceed so much from the vicious nature of the poem, as from the want of capacity in the poet. Thus it was thought an easy matter to write better than this poet, and if there occurred any thing that was good in his operas, a person was not allowed to be lavish in commendations of the author, under the penalty of being reputed a shallow capacity. We have therefore seen Quinault please for some time, whilst the very people he pleased, durst not maintain that he was an excellent poet in his way. But the public being confirmed in their sentiment by experience, have got rid of that constraint in which they had been so long confined, and plucked up at length a resolution to speak out their thoughts. There have been some later poets who have encouraged people to say, that Quinault excelled in that kind of lyric poetry to which he applied himself. La Fontaine and other choice wits have done something more to convince us, that some of Quinault's operas are as excellent as those poems really can be. They have wrote operas themselves, that are vastly inferior to several

veral of Quinault's. Sixty years ago it was treason to say that Quinault was an excellent poet in his way ; and no body now durst say the contrary. Among the prodigious number of operas which have been wrote since his time, there are none but *Thetis and Peleus*, *Iphigenia*, the *Venetian Feasts*, and *Europe in Gallantry*, that are ranked in the same class with those of this excellent poet.

Were we to examine the history of such poets as have been an honor to the French Parnassus, we shall find none but what are indebted to the public for the success of their works ; none but what have had the professors of the art a long while their declared enemies. The public admired the *Cid* a considerable time, before poets would allow this piece to be filled with most exquisite beauties. How many sorry criticisms, and wretched comedies, have not Moliere's rivals wrote against him ? Did Racine ever publish a tragedy, without exposing it to some critical piece, which reduced it upon a level with the most indifferent performance, and concluded with ranking the author in the same class with Boyer and Pradon ? But Racine met with the same fate as Quinault. Boileau's prediction in favor of Racine's tragedies is fully accomplished, and impartial posterity has declared itself in their favor. The same may be said of painters. Not one of them would have attained after his death to the degree of distinction due to his merit, were his fate to be always in the power of other painters. But by good luck his rivals are masters of his reputation but for a short time ; for the public takes the cause by degrees into their own hands,

hands, and after an impartial inquiry, does every body justice according to their merit.

But (some will say) if my comedy is damned by means of the hisses and catcalls of an invidious party, how will the public be able to do justice to this piece, if they never afterwards hear of it? I answer in the first place, that I do not apprehend that a party can damn a piece, let them hiss it ever so much. *The Grumbler* was hissed, but was not damned for all that. In the second place, the play is printed, and thus remains under the eyes of the public. A man of sense, but of a profession too serious to be prejudiced against the merit of a piece by an event which he has never heard spoken of, reads it without partiality or preception, and finds it a good performance. This he tells to such as have an opinion of his judgment, who read it, and find his judgment exact. These inform others of their discovery, and the piece which I am willing to suppose had been sunk, begins to rise again above water. This is one manner out of a hundred, whereby a good piece which had been wronged upon its first appearance, may be raised to the rank due to its merit. But, as I have already observed, this is what never happens, and I do not really think that there can be one instance given of a French piece rejected by the public, upon its first appearance, which has been afterwards approved, when the conjunctures, that first oppressed it, were removed. On the contrary, I could name several comedies and operas, that have been damned upon their being first represented, which have had the same fate when they have

have been brought twenty years afterwards upon the stage. And yet the parties, to which the author and his friends imputed its first fall, were quite dispersed, upon their being revived a second time. But the public never changes its sentiment, because it espouses always the right side of the question. A piece appears still an indifferent performance upon its revival, if it was judged such at its first representation. If one should ask me, what time the public takes to be able to know a work, and to form its judgment of the merit of the artist; I answer, that the length of this time depends on two things; that is, on the nature of the work, and on the capacity of the public before whom it is exhibited. A theatrical piece, for instance, will be sooner appraised to its just value, than an epic poem. The public is assembled to pass judgment on the pieces of the theatre, and those who are there convened, soon communicate their sentiments to one another. A painter who paints the cupola's and vaults of churches, or who makes large pictures designed for places where public assemblies are held, is sooner known than one that works on easel-pieces destined for private apartments.

C H A P. XXIX.

That there are some countries in which the value of works is sooner known, than in others.

IN the second place, as the public is not equally knowing in all countries, there are some parts where artists can keep them longer in the dark, than in others. For instance, pictures exposed at Rome, will be sooner appraised to their just value, than if they were to be exposed at London or Paris. The inhabitants of Rome are almost all of them born with a very great sensibility for painting, and their natural taste has likewise frequent occasions of improving and perfecting itself by the help of those excellent works, which they meet with in their churches, palaces, and almost every house they enter. The customs and manners of the country leave a great vacancy or leisure in every body's daily occupations, even in those of such artists as are condemned elsewhere to as uninterrupted labor as that of the Danaids. This inaction, together with the continual opportunities they have of seeing fine pictures, and perhaps the greater sensibility also of the organs in that country than in cold climates, produces so general a taste for painting at Rome, that 'tis a common thing to see some valuable pictures in barbers shops, where they explain their beauties most emphatically to their customers, to comply with the necessity of entertaining people, which even in Horace's time seemed to be a duty of their profession. In fine, in an industrious nation,

capable

capable of taking all sorts of pains to get a livelihood, without being subject to regular labor, a peculiar set of people have been formed, who subsist by means of a traffick in pictures.

Thus the public in Rome is almost intirely composed of connoisseurs in painting. 'Tis true, they are but indifferent connoisseurs; yet they have at least a comparative taste, which hinders the professors of the art from imposing upon them so easily as in other places. If the inhabitants of this city are not learned enough to refute methodically their false reasonings, they are capable at least of perceiving the fallacy, and of informing themselves of what they must say in order to refute it. On the other hand, artists become more circumspect, when they find they have to do with men that understand something of the matter. 'Tis not among divines that your reformers undertake to make sincere proselytes to their doctrines.

A painter therefore who works at Rome attains quickly to the degree of reputation he deserves, especially if he be an Italian. The Italians, almost as fond of the glory of their nation as the ancient Greeks, are very jealous of the fame which a nation acquires by sciences and the polite arts. With respect to the sciences, all the Italians must certainly agree to what signor Ottieri has wrote in the history of the war which broke out in consequence of the disputes concerning the succession of Charles II king of Spain². This author after observing, that the Italians ought not to give any longer the name of Barbarians to the inhabitants of

² Printed at Rome in 1728.

provinces situated to the north and west of Italy; but only to call them *Ultramontanes*; because of the politeness they have acquired in these latter ages, adds^a; and our Italians, tho' endowed with as great a share of sense and capacity as other nations, are for this and several other reasons, fallen into a very great degeneracy with respect to real and solid learning. But this nation thinks differently in regard to the polite arts. Every Italian becomes therefore a painter, when he is to give his opinion of a foreign picture. He even complains, as it were, that the ideas capable of being an honor to the inventor, should occur to any but his own countrymen. A friend of mine was eye-witness to the following adventure.

Every one knows the misfortunes of Belisarius, reduced to ask charity on the highway, after having frequently commanded with the most signal success the armies of the emperor Justinian. Vandyke has drawn a large easel-piece, in which this unfortunate general is represented in the posture of a beggar stretching out his hand to the passengers. Each person that stands gazing at him, seems moved with a compassion which expresses the character of his age and condition. But our attention is particularly engaged by a soldier, whose countenance and attitude expresses a person plunged into the deepest meditation, at the sight of this great warrior precipitated

^a E i nostri Italiani benchè forniti di senno e capacità non inferiore all' altre nazioni, sono rimasti per questa, e per altre cagioni avviliti, e presso che abbietti nel preggio dell' eccellente litteratura.
pag. 296.

into the lowest misery, from a rank which is the highest aim of military ambition. This soldier is so extremely well done, that one seems to hear him say, *behold what must perhaps be my fate after forty campaigns!* An English nobleman happening to be at Rome, where he brought this picture, shewed it to Carlo Maratti. What a pity it is (says this painter, with one of those sallies which with a single stroke gives a description of the bottom of the heart) that an *Ultramontane* should have prevented us in this beautiful invention? I have even heard from persons worthy of credit, that among the common people at Rome, some of them were such declared enemies to the reputation of our French painters, as to tear the prints engraved from Sueur, le Brun, Mignard, Coypel, and some other painters of our nation, which the Carthusians of that city had placed together with prints engraved from Italian artists in the gallery over the cloysters of their monastery. The comparisons made there every day between the French and Italian masters, provoked our jealous Romans, as much as the parallels made at Paris about fourscore years ago, between the pictures drawn by Sueur in the little cloyster of the Carthusians, and those by le Brun, irritated the eleves of the latter. As the Carthusians at Paris were obliged to hide Sueur's pieces, to prevent them from being exposed to the insults of le Brun's eleves; so the Carthusians at Rome were forced to hinder ordinary people from coming into the gallery where the prints of French painters are exposed.

The French are generally prepossessed in favor of foreigners, where the question does not relate to cookery and dress ; but the Italians on the contrary are prejudiced against the *Ultramontanes*. The Frenchman at first supposes the foreign artist to be more skilful than his countryman, nor is he disabused of his error, till after having made several comparisons. He finds some difficulty in allowing an artist born in the same country with himself, to be as knowing in his profession as one born five hundred leagues from France. On the contrary, the prepossession of the Italians is seldom in favor of a stranger who professes the liberal arts ; and if ever they do him justice, 'tis as late as possible. Thus after having neglected Poussin for a considerable time, they have acknowledged him at length for one of the most eminent masters that ever handled a pencil. In the same manner they have done justice to Monsieur le Brun's genius ; for after having made him prince of the academy of St Luke, they mention his merit with respect, tho' they take too much notice of the weak coloring of this great poet, notwithstanding it is preferable to that of several of the great masters of the Roman school. The Italians in general may boast of their circumspection, and the French of their hospitality. M. Algarotti says in the epistle of his book on Sir Isaac Newton's philosophy, addressed to M. Fontenelle : *Were it not for the translation of some French books, we should see nothing new in Italy, but collections of verses and songs, with which we swarm*^a.

^a *Algarotti, epistle on the Newtonian philosophy, dated the 24th of Janury, 1736.*

People are not so knowing in painting at Paris, as at Rome ; and the French in general have not their inward sense so lively as the Italians. The difference between them is already visible in those who dwell at the foot of the Alps on the side of France and Italy ; but it is still greater between the natives of Paris and Rome. Besides, we are far from cultivating as much as they, the common sensibility of man for painting ; nor do we, generally speaking, acquire the comparative taste as well here as at Rome. This taste is formed within us, even without thinking of it : By dint of beholding pictures during our youth, the idea and image of eleven or twelve excellent pictures is engraved and imprinted deeply in our yet tender imagination. Now these pictures, which are always present to us, and have a certain rank, and fixt merit, serve, if I may say so, for pieces of comparison, which inable us to judge solidly, how near a new work approaches the perfection which other painters have attained, and in what rank it deserves to be placed. The idea these twelve pictures present to our minds, produces part of the effect which would have proceeded from the pictures themselves, were they placed next to that whose merit and rank we want to discern. The difference observable between the merit of two pictures set opposite to one another, is obvious to every body that is not either stupid or blind.

But to acquire this comparative taste, which inables us to judge of a present by an absent picture, a person must have been bred in the very

center of painting. He must have frequent opportunities, especially in his younger days, of beholding several excellent pictures in perfect ease and tranquillity. Liberty of mind is as necessary, in order to be sensible of the intire beauty of a work, as to compose it. To be a good spectator, one must have that peace of soul, which rises not from the exhausting, but from the serenity of the imagination.

*Phædri libellos legere si desideras,
Vaces oportet, Eutyche, a negotiis,
Ut liber animus sentiat vim carminis.*

PHÆD. lib. 3. prolog.

Now we spend our lives in France in a continual series of pleasures or tumultuary occupations, which leave hardly any void space in our time, but keep us in a constant hurry and fatigue of spirit. One may apply to us, what Pliny said formerly of the Romans of his time (who were a little more occupied than the present Romans) when he complains of the slender notice they took of the magnificent statues, with which several porticos were adorned^a. *The great multitude and burry of busines and employments diverts every one from the contemplation of these objects ; a contemplation suited to those only, who have leisure and tranquillity of mind.* Our life is a perpetual scene of trouble and embarrassment, either to make a fortune capable of satisfying our

^a *Magni negotiorum officiorumque acervi abducunt omnes a contemplatione talium, quoniam otiosorum & in magno loci silentio apta admiratio taliis est.* PLIN. hist. 1. 36. cap. 5.

boundless desires, or to preserve it in a country, where it is not less difficult to keep than to acquire. Pleasures which are brisker and more repeated here than in other countries, lay hold of the little time left us by the occupations which either fortune has laid out for us, or our own inquietude of mind has procured us. A great many courtiers have lived thirty years at Versailles, walking to and fro regularly five or six times a day in the great apartment, whom you might easily persuade, that the pilgrims of Emaus were done by le Brun ; and the Queens of Persia at Alexander's feet, by Paolo Veronese. My French readers will find no difficulty in believing me. Hence it is, that Sueur deserved his fame so long before he enjoyed it. Poussin, whom we extol so much in our days, was in no great esteem with the public, when in his very best days he came to practise in France. But disinterested persons, who are directed in their sentiments by truth, recover themselves, tho' somewhat late ; and laying a stress upon an opinion which they observe has been embraced by the majority, they oppose those who would attempt to put two very unequal artists upon a level. One of them ascends a step higher every year, while the other descends a step lower, till at length they come to be so distant from one another, that the public being disabused, is surprized to have seen them placed in the same rank. Can we conceive, that Monsieur Mignard could have been compared for some time to le Brun ? Perhaps we shall be as much surprized twenty years hence, when we come to reflect on the parallels made in the present times.

The same thing has happened at Antwerp, where the generality of people understand no more of painting, than they do at Paris. Before Vandyke went to England, the other painters raised him rivals, whom the deluded public imagined to have been his equals in merit. But now the distance between them appears infinite, because every day error loses a partisan, while truth acquires one. When the school of Rubens was in its full prime, the Dominicans at Antwerp wanted fifteen large pictures to adorn the body of their church. Vandyke, satisfied with the price, offered to do them all: But the other painters advised those good fathers to divide the work, and to employ twelve of Rubens's eleves, who seemed to be pretty near in the same class. They persuaded those friars, that the difference of hands would render the order of those pictures more agreeable, and that emulation would also oblige each painter to exert himself in a work destined to be compared eternally to those of his competitors. Thus out of fifteen pictures Vandyke did but two, namely, the flagellation, and the carrying of the cross. But the public cannot think at present of Vandyke's rivals without indignation and resentment.

As we have had a greater number of excellent poets than painters in France, the natural taste for poetry has had therefore a better opportunity of improving, than that for painting. If the fine pictures are almost all of them shut up at Paris in places where the public has not a free access, we have our theatres open to all the world, where we may venture to say (without apprehending the

the reproach of being led away by national prejudice, a thing almost as dangerous as a party spirit) the best theatrical pieces are represented, that have been written since the recovery of letters. Foreigners do not adopt the comedies and tragedies of other nations with the same readiness, nor with that respect for their authors, as they do ours. They translate our tragedies; while they are satisfied with imitating those of other nations. Most young people frequent the playhouses in France, and, without reflection or design, retain an infinite number of comparative pieces and touchstones in their memory. The women resort to our public diversions with as much freedom as the men, and they all talk very frequently of poetry, and especially of the dramatic kind. Thus the public knows enough to do justice readily to bad pieces, and to support the good ones against the caballing of parties.

The justice rendered to works that are sent abroad by means of the press, may indeed be some months before it appears; but performances brought upon the stage have their fate decided much sooner. There would be nothing certain in consequence of human knowledge, could four hundred persons, after communicating their thoughts to one another, believe they are moved when they are not; or were they to be affected by an object that has nothing engaging in its nature. Indeed the public cannot decide so quickly the difference between good and exquisite; wherefore they cannot commend at first a piece like *Phædra*, as much as it deserves. They cannot

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conceive the full merit of a work, till they have seen it several times, nor give it the preference it deserves, till after having compared for a while the pleasure it gives them, with the satisfaction they receive from such excellent works as have had a long and established approbation.

C H A P. XXX.

Objection drawn from good works which have been disapproved at first by the public; as also from bad ones that have been commended. Answer to this objection.

IT will be objected here, that there have been some wretched farces, and pitiful comedies, which have amused the town for a long time, and have sometimes drawn spectators to the twentieth night. But those who go to see these farces while they are new, will tell you themselves they are not deceived, and that they are very sensible of the little merit of those Smithfield comedies. They will tell you upon the very spot, that they make an immense difference betwixt those pieces and the Misanthrope, and that they come thither merely to see an actor, who succeeds in some odd character, or else a scene which bears a relation to a recent event, that is very much talked of in the world. Wherefore as soon as the time of their novelty is elapsed, and the conjuncture which supported them is over, they are then intirely forgot, and the players

do not remember a word of them ; which proves what Terence says,

*Olim cum stetit nova,
Actoris opera magis stetisse quam sua.*

TER. prolog. PHORM.

But (some will continue to object) the success of the Misanthrope was dubious for some time. Pradon's Phædra, which the public has now so great a contempt for, and which, to say something more, it has so perfectly forgot, had at first as great success as the Phædra of Racine. Pradon had for some time as many spectators at the *Hôtel de Guenegaud*, as Racine at the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*. In a word, these two tragedies, which appeared in the same month, struggled for several days, before the good one obtained the victory.

Tho' the Misanthrope is, perhaps, the best comedy extant ; yet we are not surprized that the public hesitated a little before it acknowledg'd its excellency, and that the general suffrage did not declare in its favor 'till after eight or ten representations ; when we reflect on the circumstances in which it was first exhibited. The world was a stranger at that time to that noble comic kind of writing, which sets true but different characters against one another, so as to cause a result of diverting incidents, tho' the personages never affect any pleasantry. 'Till then the public were hardly ever diverted with natural faces : Wherefore as they were accustomed for a long time to a coarse or *Romantic* comedy, which entertained them with low, or improbable adventures, and introduced none but dawbed

dawbed or grotesque buffoons on the stage, they were surprized to behold a muse, which without putting any ridiculous masks on the faces of the actors, exhibited nevertheless most excellent characters for comedy. Moliere's rivals swore all this time from the knowledge they had of the stage, that this new kind of comedy was good for nothing. Thus the public were in suspence for a few days : They did not know whether they were in the wrong to believe that *Jodolet Master and Servant*, and *Don Japhet of Armenia* were in the right taste ; or whether they were to blame for thinking that this taste was to be found in the *Misanthrope*. But after a certain number of representations people began to see, that the method of treating comedy as a moral philosopher, was much the best ; and leaving the jealous poets (a set of men who are as little to be credited with respect to the works of their competitors, as women are to be believed with regard to the merit of their rivals) leaving them, I say, to rail against the *Misanthrope*, they brought themselves in a very little time to admire it.

Persons of an exquisite taste, saw from the very beginning which way the public would shortly be determined. Every one knows the commendations the duke of Montauzier bestowed on the *Misanthrope* upon its very first representation. Boileau, upon seeing the third, assured Racine, that he was not vexed at the danger to which Moliere's reputation was likely to be exposed, for this comedy would very soon meet with most surprizing success. The public justified the prediction of the author of the art of poetry, and the French for these many years have cited

cited the Misanthrope as the honor of their comic stage. In fact, this is, of all our French pieces, that which our neighbours seem to be most fond of.

As for Pradon's Phædra, we still remember that a cabal formed of several partizans, among whom there were persons equally considerable for their wit and the rank they held in the world, had conspired to raise Pradon's Phædra, and to humble that of Racine. The conspiracy of the marquiss of Bedmar against the republic of Venice, was not conducted with greater artifice, nor continued with more vigor. But what was the effect of this conspiracy? It brought a fuller house than there would otherwise have been to Pradon's tragedy, merely to see how Racine's competitor had treated the same subject. But this famous conspiracy could not hinder the public from admiring Racine's Phædra after the fourth night. When the success of those two tragedies seemed pretty equal, reckoning the people who took tickets at the *Hotel de Guenegaud* and the *Hotel de Bourgogne*, one might easily see it was quite the reverse, upon hearing the sentiments of those who returned from these Hotels, where two separate companies at that time acted the French comedy. At a month's end this shadow of equality disappeared, and the *Hotel de Guenegaud*, where Pradon's piece was acted, became a perfect desert. Every one knows Boileau's verses on the success of Corneille's Cid :

*En vain contre le Cid un ministre se ligue,
Tout Paris pour Chimene à les yeux de Rodrigue.*

*In vain the court against the Cid conspires,
While the whole town the fair Chimene admires.*

I have already mentioned the operas of Quinault, and have said enough, methinks, to convince such of our dramatic poets as have miscarried in their plays, that the public proscribes none but bad performances. If we can apply the following verse of Juvenal to them,

Haud tamen invideas vati quem pulpita pascunt.

Juv. Sat. 7.

'Tis for other reasons foreign to my present subject.

It might be still objected, that the Greeks and Romans pronounced frequently unjust sentences in their theatres, which they afterwards retracted. Martial says, that the *men of Athens* denied Menander frequently the prize due to his comedies.

Rara coronato plausere theatra Menandro.

Authors cited by Aulus Gellius ^a have observed, that out of a hundred comedies written by Menander, there had been eight only which obtained the prize given by the ancients to poets, who were so lucky as to write the best piece among those that were represented on certain solemnities. We learn also from Gellius, that Euripides was crowned for five tragedies only out of seventy five which he composed. The public disgusted with Terence's *Hecyra*, when it was first acted, would not let the players go through with it.

I answer, that Gellius and Martial do not say, that the tragedies of Euripides, or Menander's co-

^a AULUS GELLIUS. lib. 17. cap. 4.

medies

medies were condemned, tho' others might have been more entertaining. Were those victorious pieces extant, perhaps we should be able to unfold that which dazzled the spectator : Perhaps we should even find, that the spectator was right in his judgment. Tho' the great Corneille be, generally speaking, much superior to Rotrou, are there not several of the former's tragedies (I will not presume to determine the number) which would lose the prize when compared to Rotrou's Wenceslaus, in the judgment of an impartial assembly. In like manner, tho' Menander wrote some comedies which rendered him superior to Philemon (a poet, whose pieces frequently gained the prize over Menander's) might not Philemon have composed several pieces which merited the prize in preference to some of Menander's ? Quintilian says, " that the Athenians were mistaken in one thing only with respect to Philemon, which was, their preferring him too often to Menander. They would have been in the right, had they been satisfied to give him the second place ; for in every body's judgment, he deserved to be ranked immediately next to Menander ". Apuleius speaks ^b of this same Philemon in the second book of his *Florida*, as of a poet who had very great talents, and was particularly commendable for the moral excellence of his

^a *Philemon, qui ut pravis sui temporis judiciis Menandro s^epe p^relatus est, ita consensu omnium meruit credi secundus.* QUINTA Inst. 1. 10.

^b *Sententiae vitae congruentes. Raro apud illum corruptelae, & uti errores concessi amores.*

APUL. FLOR.

comedies.

comedies. He praises him for abounding in good maxims, for mixing very few dangerous passages in his plays, and for treating love as a treacherous and bewitching passion. Were not the Athenians in the right to have a regard to the morality of their comic poets, in distributing their prizes?

As for Euripides, the very best dramatic poets of Greece were his cotemporaries, and 'tis such pieces as theirs that have frequently obtained the prize in opposition to his. 'Tis therefore a wrong thing to place Euripides and Menander at the head of those poets that have been disregarded by the spectators, in order to console by the likeness of their faces such of our dramatic writers, as have had the misfortune of the public's being dissatisfied with their performances.

I have still another reason to produce in answer to the objection I am refuting. 'Tis that the theatre of those days was not a tribunal comparable to ours. As the theatres of the ancients were very large, where people entered without paying, the assemblies degenerated into a multitude of careless people, who were consequently ready to disturb those that shewed any attention. Horace informs us, that the blustering of the winds, locked up in the forests of Mount St Angel, and the roaring of the sea, agitated by a tempest, did not raise a more frightful noise than those tumultuous assemblies. "What players, says he, have a voice strong enough to make themselves heard?"

Nam quæ pervincere voces
 Evaluere sonum, referunt quem nostra theatra?
 Garganum mugire putas nemus aut mare Tuscum;
 Tanto cum strepitu ludi spectantur.

HORAT. ep. i. l. 2.

For who can judge, or who can bear the wit
 When noise and strange confusion fills the pit?
 As when the winds dash waves against the shoar,
 Or lash the woods, and all the monsters roar:
 So great the shout, when rich and strangely dress'd
 The player comes, they clap his gawdy vest.

CREECH.

The lower class of people who were soon tired, because they could not be attentive throughout the piece, called out sometimes with loud shouts and cries, even as early as the third act, for diversions more proportioned to their capacities; and they even insulted those who desired the comedians to proceed. A description of one of those mobbish uproars may be seen in the sequel of the above-cited passage of Horace, and in the prologue of the *Hecyra*, the representation of which was twice interrupted by the heat and violence of the people. There were magistrates indeed appointed to prevent these disorders; but they seldom did their duty, as is frequently the case in matters of greater importance. At Rome and under the reign of Tiberius (who of all the Roman princes understood best the art of making himself obeyed) some of the principal officers of the emperor's guards were either killed or wounded at the theatre, attempting to hinder the disorder; and the only satisfaction obtained, was that the senate gave the

prætors leave to banish the authors of those tumults. The emperors who were desirous of ingratiating themselves with the people, abolished even the custom of sending soldiers to mount guard at the play-houses. Our theatres are not subject to the like storms, but have the happiness of enjoying a calm and order, which one would think it impossible to establish in assemblies, that so lively a nation as ours forms for their diversion, and where one part of the citizens comes armed, and the other disarmed. Here they listen very peaceably to bad plays, and sometimes to as indifferent players.

We have no public assemblies like the ancients to judge of poems that are not of the dramatic kind. Wherefore artists are better able to favor, or decry those poems, whose publication is made by means of the press. They have it in their power to set the fine passages off, and to excuse the bad ones; as they can diminish the merit of the good ones, either by saying they were stolen, or by comparing them to the verses of another poet, who has handled the like subject. When the public have been thus imposed upon in the general character of one of those poems, they cannot be undeceived in a day. There is some time requisite for disinterested persons to be sensible of their mistakes, and to confirm themselves in the right opinion by the authority of numbers. The greatest proof we can therefore have of the excellency of a poem, upon its first appearing, is its engaging us to continue the reading of it, and that those who have perused it speak of it with a kind of affection, even when they censure its faults.

I am of opinion, that the time requisite for deciding the merit of a new poem, such as can be really called a good work, is confined to two years after its first edition. If it is a bad performance, the public does not take so much time to condemn it, let the professors of the art exert themselves ever so much to support its reputation. When the Maid of Orleans made its first appearance, it had the advantage of being encouraged by men of letters, as well French as foreigners. The great men of the nation had crowned it already with favors, and the world prepossessed by all these encomiums, waited for it with the censer in hand. And yet as soon as the Maid of Orleans was read, people shook off their prejudice, and despised it even before any critic had published the reasons of its being worthy of contempt. The premature credit of the work occasioned numbers to inquire into this affair with greater curiosity and spirit: and every one learnt from the first researches they made, that others yawned as well as themselves in perusing it, and that the maid was grown old in her cradle.

C H A P. XXXI.

*That the public judgment is not recalled, but is
every day more strongly confirmed.*

THE judgment of the public receives an additional strength from time. The Maid of Orleans is continually more despised; whilst every day increases the veneration with which we look upon

on Polyeuctes, Phædra, the Misanthrope, and the Art of poetry. The reputation of a poet cannot reach during his life to its due point of elevation. An author, who is thirty years of age, when he publishes his best works, cannot live so many years longer as is necessary for the public to know, not only that his works are excellent, but likewise that they are of the same order as those Greek and Roman pieces, which have been so much extolled by those that understood them. Till the works of a modern author are placed in the abovementioned rank, his reputation may increase continually. Wherefore two or three years are sufficient to know whether a new poem be good, or indifferent; but perhaps an intire century is requisite to be able to judge of its whole merit, upon supposition of its being a work of the first order. Hence the Romans, who had Tibullus and Propertius's elegies in their hands, were some time before they ranked those of Ovid in the same clas. Hence likewise that same people did not quit the reading of Ennius, as soon as Virgil's Eclogues and Bucolics made their first appearance. This is what the following epigram from Martial literally signifies, which is generally cited by poets, who are not so happy as to meet with success.

Ennius est lectus salvo tibi Roma Marone.

MART. 10. Epigr. lib. 5.

It would be so much the more ridiculous to pretend, that Martial meant here, that the Romans had placed Ennius's poems for some time in the same rank with the Æneid, as this epigram can relate only

to what passed at Rome in Virgil's life-time. Now every one knows that the *Aeneid* was one of those works which are called posthumous, for being published after the death of the author.

I distinguish two sorts of merit (If I may call them so) in a poem; one real, and the other comparative. The first consists in pleasing and moving: The second in moving as much or more than authors of a known character. It consists in pleasing and engaging as much as those Greeks and Romans, who are generally supposed to have attained to the highest pitch that human understanding can reach, because we have not yet seen any thing that surpasses them.

Cotemporaries judge well of the real merit of a work, but they are apt to mistake, when they judge of its comparative merit, or when they attempt to decide the rank due to it. They are subject in this case to fall into one of the following errors.

The first is to put a work too soon upon a level with those of the ancients. The second, to suppose a greater distance than there is in reality between it and the ancient pieces. I say therefore in the first place, that the public are mistaken sometimes, when too much charmed with such new productions as move and please them; they usurp unseasonably the rights of posterity, by deciding that these productions are of the same order as the classic, and, as we commonly call them, consecrated performances of the Greeks and Romans; and that their authors will be always the principal poets in their language. 'Tis thus the

cotemporaries of Ronsard and the French Pleiades were mistaken, in pronouncing that the French poets would never be able to surpass those new Prometheus's^{*}, who, to express myself poetically, had no other divine fire at their disposal, but what they borrowed from the writings of the ancients.

Ronsard, the brightest star of those pleiades, had a great deal of learning, but very little genius. We do not find in his verses such sublime ideas, such happy turns of expression, nor such noble figures, as we observe in the Greek and Latin authors. As he had no enthusiasm, but was a mere admirer of the ancients, the reading of them warmed him, and served him instead of Apollo's tripod. But as he boldly adopts (which is his sole merit) the beauties collected in his reading, without confining himself to the rules of our syntax, these beauties seem to rise from his own invention. His liberties of expression appear like sallies of a natural warmth of vein, and his verses composed in imitation of Virgil and Homer, have also the air of an original. The ornaments therefore with which his works are strewed, were capable of pleasing readers, who did not understand those originals, or who were so doatingly fond of them, as to carefs even the resemblance of their features in the most disfigured copies. 'Tis true, Ronsard's language is not French; but people imagined at that time, that it was impossible to write poetically and correctly in our tongue. Besides, poems in the vulgar languages are as necessary for polite nations, as those first conveniences that are

* RONSARD, BELLEAU, JOACHIM DU BELLAY, JODELLE,
PONTUS DE THIART, DORAT, BAIF.

contrived by a growing luxury. When Ronsard and his cotemporaries, of whom he was the chief, appeared, our ancestors had hardly any poems which they could read with pleasure. The commerce with the ancients, which had been surprizingly increased since the recovery of letters, by the invention of printing, gave people a distaste at that time for our old writers of romances. Hence Ronsard's cotemporaries looked upon his poems, as pieces dropt down from heaven. Had they been satisfied with saying, that his verses were infinitely pleasing to them, and that the images they abound in were vastly engaging, we should have no reason to condemn them. But they seemed to claim a right which did not belong to them; and usurped the prerogative of posterity, by proclaiming him the greatest French poet of their time, as well as of future ages.

There have been French poets since Ronsard, who had more genius, and besides composed correctly. Hence we have laid Ronsard aside, to make the works of the latter our present amusement. We very justly prefer them to Ronsard; but those who are acquainted with the latter, are not surprized that his cotemporaries found a pleasure in reading his works, notwithstanding the Gothic taste of his images. I shall finish the subject of Ronsard with one remark. This is, that the cotemporaries of this poet were not mistaken in their judgment with respect to his works, and such others as were then extant. They did not prefer in earnest the Franciad to the Æneid, when this French poem was first published. The same reasons which hindered them from being mistaken in this point, would

have likewise prevented them from preferring the *Franciad* to the *Cinna* and the *Horatii*, had these tragedies been then extant.

After what has been here said, 'tis evident we must leave to time and experience the determination of the rank, which the poets our cotemporaries are to hold among writers, who compose that collection of books, which is raised by men of letters of all nations, and may be called *the library of mankind*. Every nation has, 'tis true, a particular library of good books written in their own language, but there is besides a common one for all nations. We must therefore wait 'till a poet's reputation has gradually increased during a century, before we can decide, that he deserves to be ranked in the same class with those Greek and Roman authors, whose works are said generally to be consecrated, because they are of the number of those, which Quintilian^a defines, *the monuments of the ingenious that have the approbation of a long succession of ages*.

In the second place, I say, that the public commits sometimes another fault, by supposing the works of their cotemporaries to be remoter than they really are, from the perfection to which the ancients attained. When we have as many poems in our hands as we can read, we are too difficult in doing justice to several excellent productions, and for a long while we place them at too great a distance from consecrated performances. But every one will make naturally of himself the reflections I should be capable of offering on this subject.

^a *Ingeniorum monumenta quæ saeculis probantur.* QUINT. Inst. l. 3. c. 9.

Let us say something now of the presages, by which we may promise to such works as have been published in our days and in those of the preceding generation, the glory of being ranked by posterity, in the same order with the ancients. 'Tis a favorable omen for a work of this kind, that its reputation increases every year. This happens, when the author has no successor, and much more, when he has been dead a long time without having been replaced. Nothing is a greater proof of his having been an uncommon person in the sphere in which he shone, than the inutility of the efforts of those who have attempted to rival him. Thus sixty years which are elapsed since the death of Moliere, without substituting a person of equal abilities in his room, add a lustre to his reputation, which it could not have acquired a year after his decease. The public have not ranked in the same class with Moliere, the very best of our comic writers who have appeared since his death. This honor has not been done to Renard, to Boursault, to the two authors of the *Grumbler*^a, nor to several other comic poets, whose pieces have diverted the public, when well acted. Those even amongst our poets who are most inclined to gasconading, never compared themselves seriously to Moliere; nor have they ever ranked the author of the *Philosopher married* above him. Every year that passes without giving a successor to the French Terence will add something to his reputation. But (some will ask me) are you sure that posterity will not contradict the encomiums, which have been

^a The Abbot de BRUIEIS and PALAPRAT.

bestowed by cotemporaries on those French poets, whom you consider as placed already by future ages in the same rank with Horace and Terence.

C H A P. XXXII.

That, in spite of critics, the reputation of our admired poets will always increase.

THE works of our eminent French poets have no reason, methinks, to apprehend the fate of those of Ronsard. They have composed in the same taste as the excellent authors of antiquity; they have imitated them with judgment, and not as Ronsard and his cotemporaries, that is, servilely; and as Horace says that Servilius had imitated the Greeks,

Hoc secutus,

Mutatis tantum numeris.

This servile imitation of poets who have wrote in foreign languages, is the fate of authors who compose when their nation begins to shake off its barbarousness. But our best French poets have imitated the ancients, as Horace and Virgil imitated the Greeks, that is, by following, as the others had done, the genius of the language in which they composed, and by taking nature for their first model. Good writers borrow nothing, but the manner of copying nature. The style of Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine, and our other illustrious countrymen, will never grow so old as to surfeit people with

the

the reading of their works ; no, it will be impossible to read them without being struck with their beauties, because they are copied from nature.

In fact, our language, methinks, attained seventy years ago to its highest pitch of perfection. An author printed sixty years before Ablancourt, seemed in his time a Gothic writer. Now, tho' 'tis already upwards of fourscore years since Ablancourt wrote, his style does not appear to us to have grown old. In order to write well, we must always be directed by those rules, which this author and his first successors have followed. Every reasonable change that may happen to a language, once its syntax is become regular, can fall only upon words. Some wax old, or obsolete ; others become fashionable ; some new ones are coined ; and the orthography of others is altered, in order to soften the pronunciation. Horace has drawn the horoscope of all languages, where he says of his own :

*Multa renascentur quæ jam cecidere, cadentque
Quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,
Quem penes arbitrium est & jus & norma loquendi.*

HOR. de arte poet.

*Some words that have, or else will feel decay,
Shall be restor'd, and come again in play ;
And words now fam'd, shall not be fancy'd long,
They shall not please the ear, nor move the tongue :
As use shall these approve, and those condemn,
Use the sole rule of speech, and judge supreme.*

CREECH.

Use

Use is generally the master of words, but very seldom of the rules of syntax. Now old words never make us grow tired of an author, whose phrases are laid out in a regular construction. Do we not still read Amiot with pleasure? I shall make one observation here by the way; 'tis not because the Latin authors of the second and subsequent centuries made use of new words, or because the construction of their phrases was not pursuant to the rules of grammar, that their style appears to us so inferior to that of Livy and his cotemporaries. The authors of the second and following centuries have, generally speaking, used the same words as Livy. Their phrases have been formed according to the same rules of syntax as his, at least the difference between them in this respect was very inconsiderable. But vicious transpositions were in fashion in their times; the custom of taking words in a translated sense that did not suit them, was authorized; and they were employed, without any regard to their proper signification, either in foolish epithets, or in those figures whose false lustre presents no distinct image. 'Tis so far true, that 'tis punning upon words, and the abuse of metaphors, which, for example, disfigure the prose of Sidonius Apollinaris, that the laws made by Majorianus, and the other emperors cotemporaries of this bishop, are drawn up in as pure a style as if they had been made in the time of the first Cæsars, by reason that the authors of those laws, restrained by the dignity of their work from exceeding the limits of a grave and simple style, have not been exposed to the danger of making an abuse of figures, and of hunting after points

points and false wit. But tho' the style becomes corrupted, and the language adulterated, people will always admire the style of such authors, as have wrote when the language was in its full force and purity. We continue to commend their noble simplicity, even when we are incapable of imitating it ; for it is frequently our incapacity of performing as well as they, that is the cause of our undertaking to do better. This tinsel and study of points is so often substituted in the room of sense and energy of discourse, for no other reason but because it is easier to have some share of wit, than to be both moving and natural.

Virgil, Horace, Cicero, and Livy, were read and admired, as long as the Latin was a living language ; and the writers who composed five hundred years after those authors, and when the Latin style was already in a state of depravity, are more liberal in their praises upon them, than those who lived in the time of Augustus. The respect and veneration for the authors of the same age as Plato continued in Greece, notwithstanding the degeneracy of artists. Those authors were admired as great models, two thousand years after they had wrote, and at a time when they had so few imitators. For the truth of this I appeal to the testimony of those Greeks, who explained these authors to us after the taking of Constantinople by the Turks. The good writers of the age of Leo X, as Machiavel and Güicciardin, are not grown obsolete, with regard to the present Italians : Nay, so far from that, their style is preferred to the most florid way of writing of later writers, because the phrase

of the Italian tongue attained to its full regularity as early as the sixteenth century.

Whether therefore the style, which our principal authors adopted under Lewis XIV, continues always in fashion, that is, whether it be the style in which our poets and orators endeavour to compose; or whether it has the lot of the style in vogue under the two first Cæsars, which began to degenerate in the reign of Claudius, when men of wit usurped the liberty of introducing figures to excels, and endeavoured to supply with tinsel, that force of sense and simple elegance which their genius could not reach to; I maintain, that the celebrated poets of the age of Lewis XIV will be immortal like Virgil and Ariosto.

In the second place, our neighbours admire as much as we ourselves, our celebrated French poets, and are as ready in repeating by heart those verses of Boileau and la Fontaine, which pass for proverbs. They have even adopted our best works, by translating them into their own language. Notwithstanding the jealousy of wit and learning, which reigns between nations as well as individuals, they rank some of these translations above the works of the same kind that have been composed in their own country. Our good poems, like those of Homer and Virgil, are already placed in the abovementioned common library of nations. 'Tis as rare to find a cabinet in foreign countries without a Moliere, as without a Terence. The Italians, who avoid as much as possible all occasions of giving us any subject of vanity (perhaps because they think themselves charged with the care of our conduct) have done justice

justice to the merit of our poets. As we used to admire and translate their poets of the sixteenth century, they have paid the same honors to ours of the seventeenth ; and have rendered the best pieces of our comic and tragic writers into Italian. Castelli, secretary to the elector of Brandenburg, has translated Moliere's works into Italian, a version which has gone thro' several editions. There are also some of Moliere's pieces, which have not only been literally translated more than once into Italian, but have been moreover found so pleasing, as to deserve to be dressed and travested, as it were, into Italian comedies. There is an Italian comedy intitled, *Don Pilone*^a, which Signor Gigli the author says he borrowed from Moliere's *Tartuffe*. To make a remark here by the way, as Signor Gigli does not mention in his preface what I remember to have read in some memoirs or other, viz. that the *Tartuffe* was originally an Italian comedy, and that Moliere had only adapted it to the French stage; as, I say, Signor Gigli makes no mention of it, we may very well question the truth of what the author of those memoirs advances, who perhaps only heard it as a report. The Italians laugh and weep at these pieces with more earnestness and passion, than at the representation of their own theatrical performances ; and have been so much affected with them, that even some of their poets have complained of it. The abbot Gra-

^a *Il Don Pilone ouero il Bachettone falso, commedia tratta novamente dal Francese da Girolamo Gigli, e dedicata all' Ill. Cont. Flavia Theodoli Bolognetti. In Luca per Marescandoli, con licenza de' superiori, L'anno 1711. Pref. il soggetto di questa opera è tirato dal celebre Tartuffe del Molier.*

vina, in his dissertation on tragedy printed about five and twenty years ago^a, says, that his countrymen adopt without judgment some of our dramatic pieces, whose faults have been censured by our nation, who has explained herself upon this head by the mouth of two of her ablest critics. He means here Rapin and M. Dacier, whose judgments he produces on the French tragedies ; judgments which he adopts with so much the more pleasure, as he had composed his work principally to shew the superiority of the ancient tragedy over the modern. But methinks it will not be amiss to give the abbot's own words, desiring my reader at the same time not to forget that this gentleman was a poet himself, and had composed several tragedies in imitation of the ancients^b. *Thus we have seen with what severity the French nation (a nation so prodigiously improved since the time of Francis I) passes her judgment on the merit of her own theatrical pieces by means of her most learned critics ; and with what precaution and distinction she proposes such, as are blindly and indiscriminately received and diffused amongst our theatres, translated with the fringes of ridiculous points, romantic expressions, and other such glittering*

^a In 1715.

^b Or ecco questa nazione dal tempo di Francesco primo sino à nostri giorni cultissima, con che serietà di giudicio per mezzo de i suoi più fini critici pronuncia delle proprie opere teatrali, e con che distinzione propone quelle, che da noi ciecamente & senza discrezione alcuna sono ricevute e sparse per tutti i teatri, e tradotte col fregio de i novi pensieri falsi ed espressioni più Romanesche ed altre più belle pompe, le quali staccano per sempre la mente e la favella de gli uomini

glittering tinsel, which never fail to alienate the minds and language of men from the rules of nature and reason. If, as this author pretends, his countrymen dawb our pieces with points and romantic expressions, the reproach does not relate to us.

Young people that have any thing of a polite education, are as well acquainted with Boileau as with Horace, and generally retain as many verses of the French as of the Latin poet, at the Hague, Stockholm, Copenhagen, in Poland, Germany, and even in England. We need not be afraid of the partiality of the English in our favor; yet they admire Racine, Corneille, Boileau, and Moliere. They have shewn the same esteem for them as for Virgil and Cicero, by translating them into their language; for as soon as a French piece succeeds in France, it is almost sure of attaining to this honor. I do not think that the English have three different translations of Virgil's eclogues, and yet they have three different versions of the tragedy of the Horatii by Corneille*. As early as 1675 they had a prose version of Racine's Andromache, revised and fitted to the stage by M. Crown. In 1712 Mr Philips published a new translation in verse of this same tragedy, which has been also acted. 'Tis true, he has added three scenes at the end of the fifth act, and as they are very proper for shewing the taste of Phillips's countrymen, I will give here an extract of what they contain. In the first of these additional scenes, Phœnix appears with a numerous retinue,

mini dalle regole della natura, e della ragione. GRAVINA, p. 115.

* That of Lower printed in 1656. That of Cotton printed in 1671. That of Mrs. Philips finished by Sir John Denham, and printed in 1678.

whom he commands to pursue Orestes. In the second, Andromache appears again upon the stage, not as M. Racine made her return in the first edition of his tragedy^a, that is, as a captive of Orestes, who is going to carry her with him to Sparta. But she comes back to offer to the body of Pyrrhus, which is brought upon the stage, all the attendance and care of a fond wife afflicted with the death of her husband. In the third scene, hearing a military sound which announces the proclamation of her son Astianax, she abandons herself to sentiments suitable to her character.

I speak here of those translations only which are published as such; for it frequently happens that English translators will not own themselves in that character, but attempt to give their copy for an original. How often has Mr Dryden^b, even in the judgment of his own countrymen, given nothing more than a mere translation of French authors in works, which he published for his own? But I should fatigue the reader, were I to enter too far into these particulars.

The Germans have rendered several of our French poets into their tongue, tho' they had less occasion for translations of this sort, than other nations, by reason that they have honored our language with making it familiar in their country. They write very frequently to one another in French, and several princes use this language in corresponding with their ministers, tho' they are natives of Germany.

^a Done in 1668. p. 86.

^b LANGBAINE'S Lives of the dramatic poets. p. 131.

In Holland, those that have any thing of an education, speak French from their youth. The States use this language on several occasions, and even fix their great seal to acts drawn up in French. The Dutch nevertheless have translated several of our best works, especially our dramatic pieces; which they have naturalized as Dutchmen.

Count Ericeyra, the worthy heir of the Livy of his country, has translated Boileau's Art of poetry into Portuguese. Now 'tis observable that our neighbours did not translate our old tragedies, such as those of Jodelle and Garnier. In Henry the IVth's time, there was no such thing, as companies of French comedians strolling about Holland, Poland, Germany, the North, and some states of Italy, to act the pieces of Hardi and Chretien. But now there are companies of French comedians, that have fixt settlements in foreign countries.

The suffrage of our neighbours, which is as free and disinterested as that of posterity, appears to me as a security of its approbation. The praises which Boileau has bestowed upon Moliere and Racine, will procure them as much esteem in future times, as they have obtained amongst the English and the Italians our contemporaries.

It will not signify to say, that the vogue which the French language has had within these seventy years, is the cause of the reputation which our poems have in foreign countries. Foreigners will tell us themselves, that our poems and books have contributed more than any thing else to give the language, in which they are wrote, so great a

currency, that it has almost deprived the Latin of the advantage of being a language, which most nations learn by a kind of tacit convention, to make themselves understood. We may apply to the French tongue what Cicero said of the Greek ^a: *Greek works are read by almost every nation ; but the Latin is confined within its own narrow bounds.* When a German minister has an affair to negotiate with an English or Dutch minister, there is no dispute about the language they are to use in their conferences: It has been settled long ago, that they are to speak French. Foreigners even complain that the French invades the rights, as it were, of living languages, by introducing its words and phrases instead of their own expressions. The Germans and Dutch complain, that the use which their countrymen make of French words, but especially of the verbs, in speaking Dutch and German, corrupts their languages, as much as Ronsard corrupted the French by the words and phrases of the learned languages, with which he intermixed his verses. The Examiner, the author of a political paper published periodically in London about thirty years ago, says that the French begins to be so vastly blended with the English phrases, in speaking of military affairs, that the common people in England are no longer able to understand the present relations of sieges and battles written by their countrymen. The abbot Gravina has made the same complaint with regard to the Italian in his

^a *Græca leguntur in omnibus ferè gentibus. Latina suis finibus exiguis sanè continentur.* CIC. orat. pro ARCHIA.

book upon tragedy. We have even reason to think, that the writings of the great men of our nation bid fair for securing to our language the fate of the Greek and Roman tongues, that is of rendering it a learned language, if ever it happens to be a dead one.

But (some will say) may not future critics observe such gross mistakes in those admired writings, as will render them contemptible to posterity ?

I answer, that the most subtle remarks of the greatest metaphysicians will never be able to diminish one degree of the reputation of our poets, because such remarks, were they even to be just, will never strip our poems of those charms, by which they have a right to please all readers. If the faults which those critics should happen to condemn, are contrary to the art of poetry, they will only teach us to know the cause of an effect, which was already felt. Those who saw the Cid, before the criticisms of the French academy were published, were sensible of some defects in this poem, tho' incapable to tell distinctly in what they consisted. If these faults should be contrary to other sciences, such as geography, or astronomy, the public will be obliged to the critics who detect them ; but still they will be incapable of diminishing the reputation of the poet, which is not founded on this, that his verses are free from the like mistakes, but that the reading of them is engaging. I said, were even those remarks to be just ; for in all probability, for one good remark there would be a hundred bad ones.

'Tis undoubtedly much easier to make well-grounded remarks on poems, when their authors

are known, and when they speak of such things as we have seen, or whose explications or applications are preserved by a yet recent tradition; than it will be hereafter, when all these lights will be extinguished by time and by revolutions to which human societies are subject. Now the remarks which are made at present against our modern poets, and dwell upon errors into which, 'tis pretended, they have fallen, either with respect to physics or astronomy, are frequently a proof that the critics have a mind to find fault, not that the poets have committed such errors. Let us give one example.

Boileau composed his letter to Monsieur de Guilleragues towards the year 1675, at a time when the new philosophy was the modish science; for we have fashions in sciences as well as in cloaths. Even the very ladies studied the new systems at that time, which several professors taught in our vulgar language at Paris. 'Tis very likely that Moliere, who wrote his *Learned Women* towards the year 1672, and who puts the dogmas and style of the new philosophy so frequently into the mouths of his heroines, attacked in that comedy the excess of a reigning taste, and that he exposed a ridiculous character which several persons acted every day in private life. When Boileau wrote his epistle to Monsieur de Guilleragues, the conversations on physics brought frequently upon the tapis the spots of the sun, by the help of which astronomers observed that this planet turns on its own axis in about seven and twenty days. Some of these *maculae* having disappeared, occasioned a great noise even upon Parnassus. The wits on this occasion said, that the sun, in order to attain to a greater resemblance

semblance to the late king, who had taken it for the body of his device, had got rid of his spots.

In this juncture, Boileau willing to express poetically, that notwithstanding the prevailing taste he applied himself intirely to the study of morals preferable to that of physics, (a sentiment very suitable to a satyric poet) writes to his friend, that he resigns several questions, which the latter science treats of, to the researches of other people. Let others, says he, inquire,

Si le soleil est fixe, ou tourne sur son axe.

Does the sun stand, or on its axis turn?

Certain it is, that the poet means here to speak only of the question, whether the sun placed in the center of our vortex, turns on its axis, or not. Even the very construction of the phrase is sufficient alone to prove, that it can have no other meaning, and this is the sense which offers itself at the very first perusal. Nevertheless several critics have explained this verse, as if the author intended to oppose the system of Copernicus, which makes the planets whirl round the sun placed in the center of our vortex, to the opinion of such as maintain that the sun hath its proper motion, by which it turns on its own axis. If Boileau meant any such thing, he was certainly in the wrong. The opinion of those who affirm that the sun turns on its axis, and the system of such as maintained before the late discoveries, that it was immoveable in the center of the vortex, suppose both alike that the sun is in the middle of the vortex, where Copernicus has placed it. Monsieur Perrault objected against Boileau upwards of thirty years ago, ^a *That those who maintain*

^a Preface to the *Apology for women*. p. 7.

that the sun is fixt, and immoveable, are the same who hold that it turns on its own axis, and that they are not two different opinions, as he seems to insinuate in his verses. True it is, continues Monsieur Perrault some lines lower, that it is not handsome for so great a poet, to be ignorant of those arts and sciences he pretends to speak of. But 'tis not Boileau's fault, if Monsieur Perrault misunderstands him, and much less is it his fault, if other critics are pleased to imagine that by the abovementioned words, he intended to oppose the system of Copernicus to that of Ptolomy, which supposes that the sun turns round the earth. Boileau has repeated it a hundred times, that his sole intention was to oppose the opinion of those who made the sun turn on its own axis, to the system of such as would not admit of this motion; and the verse itself points out this sense clear enough to want no explication.

Accusations of this nature have not lessened the reputation of our poets, since the ancients never suffered for the like injurious imputations, tho' far more considerable in number. As they wrote in languages that are reckoned dead in our days, and as a great many things they spoke of are but very imperfectly known by the most learned; we may without temerity believe, that their critics and commentators are frequently in the wrong, even on several occasions, where one cannot prove that they are not in the right.

We may therefore venture to predict, without any danger of presumption, the same fate as that of Virgil, Horace, and Cicero, to the French writers who have honoured the age of Lewis XIV, that

is of being considered in all ages and nations, as upon a rank with those great men, whose works are esteemed the most valuable productions of the human understanding.

C H A P. XXXIII.

*That the veneration and respect for the excellent authors of antiquity will always continue.
Whether it be true that we reason better than the ancients.*

BUT are not (some will say) those great men themselves exposed to be degraded? May not our present veneration for the ancients be changed into a simple esteem, in ages more enlightened than those which have so much admired them? Is not Virgil's reputation in danger of the same fate, as that of Aristotle? Is not the Iliad exposed to the destiny of Ptolomy's system, with regard to which the world is at present undeceived? Our critics make poems and other works undergo a severer trial, than they have been heretofore used to. They make analyses of them, pursuant to the method of geometers; a very proper method for discovering the faults which escaped the preceding censors. The arms of the ancient critics were not so sharp as ours. 'Tis easy to judge by the present state of the natural sciences, how much our age is more enlightened than those of Plato, Augustus, and Leo X. The perfection to which we have brought the art of reasoning, which has led us into so many discoveries

veries in the natural sciences, is a fertile source of new lights, which begin to spread themselves already over polite learning, and are likely to dispel the old prejudices from thence, as they have removed them from the natural sciences. These lights will communicate themselves likewise to the various professions of life, and we begin already to perceive their dawn in all states and conditions. Perhaps the next generation, shocked with the enormous blunders of Homer and his companions, will despise them, as a person who has attained to the use of reason, contemns the boyish stories which were the amusement of his infancy.

Our age may be perhaps more learned than the preceding ones ; but I deny that the human understanding has at present, generally speaking, more penetration, and justness, than in those times. As the most learned men have not always the most sense ; so one age, more learned than another, is not always the most rational. Now our present dispute relates to good sense, since the question is about judging. In questions where facts are generally known, a person does not judge better than another, because he is more learned, but because he has more sense and justness of mind.

It cannot certainly be proved, by the conduct of people in high or low stations of life, within these seventy years, in all those states of Europe, in which the study of sciences, that are so great an improvement to human reason, flourishes most, that the minds of men have been sounder and clearer within this period than in the preceding ages, and that during this time they have been more rational than their

their ancestors. This date of seventy years, which is given for an epoch to this pretended renovation of minds, is very ill chosen. I do not care to enter into odious details, with regard to nations and individuals, I shall be satisfied with saying, that this philosophical spirit, which renders men so rational, and as it were *so conclusive*, will very soon reduce a great part of Europe into the same state it was in under the Goths and Vandals, supposing it continues to make the same progress, as it has done within these seventy years. I see the necessary arts neglected; the most useful systems for the preservation of society abolished; and speculative reasonings preferred to practice. We behave without any regard to experience, the best director of mankind, and we have the imprudence to act, as if we were the first generation that knew how to reason. The care of posterity is intirely neglected; and the expences which our ancestors made in buildings and moveables, would have been lost to us, insomuch that we should not be able to find wood in our forests for buildings or fire, had they been rational after our present manner.

Tho' kingdoms and republics (some will say) reduce themselves to the necessity of ruining, either their subjects who lend them money, or the people who support those states by their labor which they will be no longer able to continue, after they are reduced to indigence; tho' particulars behave, as if they were to have their enemies for their heirs, and the present generation acts, as if it were to be the last sprig of mankind: this does not however hinder us from reasoning with respect to sciences, better than our predecessors.

predecessors. They may have surpassed us, if this expression be allowed me, in *practical reason*, but we excel them in the *speculative*. One may judge of our superiority of wit and reason over men of past ages, by the state in which the natural sciences are at present, and that in which they were in former times.

I answer, that 'tis true the natural sciences, which cannot be too much esteemed, nor their depositaries or trustees too much honored, are more perfect at present than they were in Augustus's time or in that of Leo X. But this is not owing to our having a greater justness and solidity of mind, nor to our knowing better how to reason than the people of those days, nor to a kind of regeneration of minds : The only cause of the perfection of natural sciences, or to speak more exactly, the only cause of these sciences being less imperfect at present than they were in former days, is our knowing more facts than they were acquainted with. Time and chance have opened to us within these latter times an infinite number of discoveries, in which I shall prove, that reasoning has had very little share ; and these discoveries have demonstrated the falsity of several philosophical dogmas, substituted by our predecessors in stead of truth, which men were before incapable of knowing.

And here, methinks, we have hit upon the solution of a problem that has been often propounded : Why should not our poets and orators surpass those of antiquity, as 'tis certain that our learned in natural sciences excel the ancient natural philosophers ? We are indebted to time for whatsoever advantage we may chance to have over the ancients in natural sciences. Time has

has demonstrated several facts which the ancients were ignorant of, in whose place they substituted erroneous opinions, which were the occasion of their making a hundred false reasonings. The same advantage which time has given us over the ancients, our posterity will have over us. 'Tis sufficient one age succeeds another to excel the preceding in the natural sciences, unless there has happened some revolution in society considerable enough to extinguish, to the prejudice of posterity, the lights by which their ancestors were directed.

But has not reasoning, say they, contributed very much to extend the new discoveries ? I grant it ; moreover I do not deny but that we reason with justness. I only deny that we reason with greater solidity than the Greeks and Romans ; and I am satisfied with affirming, that they would have made as good a use as we, of the capital truths which hazard, as it were, has detected to us, had it discovered the same truths to them. I ground my supposition on this, that they have reasoned as well as we, on all those subjects of which they could have as much knowledge ; and that we do not reason better than they, except in things of which we are better instructed, either by experience or revelation, that is, in natural sciences, and theology.

In order to prove that we reason better than the ancients, it would be requisite to shew, that it is to the justness of our reasoning, and not to chance, or fortuitous experiments, we are indebted for the knowledge of such truths as we know, and they did not. But far from being able to evince

evince that we are under an obligation for our new discoveries to philosophers who attained to the most important natural truths by methodical researches, and by the so much boasted assistance of the art of making a concatenation of conclusions; the very reverse of all this can be demonstrated. We can shew that these inventions, and, as it were, original discoveries, are intirely owing to hazard, and that we have benefited by them only in quality of last comers.

In the first place, I shall not be censured for denying to philosophers and the learned who investigate methodically the secrets of nature, all those inventions whereof they are not generally acknowledged the inventors. I can refuse them the honor of all the discoveries made within these three hundred years, which have not been published under the name of some learned person. As philosophers, and their friends likewise write, the public is informed of their discoveries, and quickly hears to what illustrious person it owes the least obligation. Wherefore I may deny that philosophers are the inventors of sluices which have been discovered within these two hundred years, and have been not only of infinite service in commerce, but have likewise furnished subjects for so many remarks on the nature and properties of water. I may deny that they were the inventors of water-mills or wind-mills, as also of weight or balance clocks, which have been so useful in observations of all kinds, by enabling us to measure time with exactness. I may deny likewise that they were the inventors of gun-powder, which has been the occasion of so many obser-

vations

vations on the air; nor of several other discoveries, whose authors are not certainly known, tho' they have contributed very much towards the perfecting of the natural sciences.

Secondly, I can alledge some positive proofs of my proposition. I can make it appear that methodical researches had no share in the four discoveries, that have contributed the most towards what superiority our present times may have over past ages in the natural sciences. These four discoveries, namely, the knowledge of the weight of the air, the compass, the art of printing, and the telescope, are intirely owing to experiments and hazard.

Printing, an art so favorable to the advancement of sciences, which grow more perfect in proportion as knowledge is thereby extended, was discovered in the fifteenth century, and near two hundred years before Descartes, who passes for the father of the new philosophy, had published his meditations. 'Tis disputed who was the first inventer of printing^a, but no one attributes this honor to a philosopher. Besides, this inventer appeared at a time, when the most he could know was the art of reasoning, such as was then taught in the schools; an art which our modern philosophers treat with so much superciliousness and contempt.

It seems the compass was known as early as the thirteenth century; but whether the use of it was discovered by John Goya a mariner of Melphi, or whether by somebody older than him, its inventer is in the same case as the inventer of printing. What lights have not been derived to those who study

^a POLYD. VIRGIL, de Inv. Rer. l. 3. c. 7.

physics;

physics, from the knowledge of the property of the loadstone in turning towards the North pole, and from the knowledge of the virtue it has to communicate this property to iron. Besides, as soon as the compass was found, the art of navigation must of necessity have been perfected, and the Europeans must sooner or later have made those discoveries, which were absolutely impossible without such an assistance, and which they have made since the latter end of the fifteenth century. These discoveries, which have brought us acquainted with America, and so many other unknown countries, have enriched botany, astronomy, physic, the history of animals, and in short, all the natural sciences. Have the Greeks and Romans given us any reason to believe they were incapable of distributing the new plants (which would have been sent them from America, and from the extremities of Asia and Afric) into different classes, and of subdividing them into several kinds ; or of distributing the stars near the Antarctic pole into constellations ?

'Twas towards the commencement of the seventeenth century, that James Metius of Alcmaer, seeking for something else, found out the telescope. It seems as if it had been the pleasure of fate to mortify the modern philosophers, by giving birth to the accident which was the cause of the invention of telescopes, before the time which these gentlemen mark as the epoch of the restoration of human understanding. Within these fourscore years, since men have begun to shew themselves so exact and penetrating, there has been no such important discovery made as that just now mentioned.

The

The springs of natural knowledge concealed from the ancients, were discovered before the period, in which it is pretended that the sciences began to acquire that perfection which reflects so great an honor on those who have improved them.

James Metius, inventor of the telescope, was a very ignorant person, pursuant to Descartes's account^a, who lived a long time in the province where the fact here in question happened, and who committed it to writing thirty years after the event. Mere hazard gave him the honor of this invention, which alone has contributed more than all the speculations of philosophers to perfect the natural sciences; and this in preference to his father and brother, who were great mathematicians. This man discovered the telescope not by any methodical research, but by a mere fortuitous experiment; for he was then amusing himself with making burning glasses.

It was an easy matter to find the microscope, after the invention of the telescope. Now we may safely affirm, that it is by the help of these instruments so many observations have been made which have enriched astronomy and natural philosophy, and rendered these sciences so much superior to what they were in former times. We are indebted likewise to these instruments for several observations in which they are not used, because they never would have been attempted, if preceding observations performed by the instruments here mentioned, had not first raised the idea of the experiment.

^a Dioptrics, chap. 1.

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The effects of such a discovery may be infinitely multiplied. After they improved astronomy, astronomy improved other sciences. It has improved, for example, geography, by giving the points of longitude with certainty, and with almost as much ease, as they could have given heretofore the points of latitude. As the progress of experience is not sudden, there was a necessity for an interval of very near fourscore years from the invention of the telescope to the planisphere of the observatory, and to Monsieur de Lisle's map of the world, the first in which the principal points of the terrestrial globe have been placed in their true position. Whatsoever facility was derived from the telescope towards ascertaining the breadth of the Atlantic ocean, since Galileo had applied it to the observation of the stars ; still all the geographers who published maps before de Lisle, have been mistaken here in several degrees. 'Tis not fifty years since this gross mistake, with regard to the distance of the coasts of Afric and South America, countries discovered two hundred years ago, has been corrected. Within this very space of time a true discovery has been also made of the real breadth of the interjacent sea between Asia and America, commonly called the South-Sea. The philosophical spirits, or your speculative naturalists, had made no use of all those facts ; when there started up a man whose profession it was to make prints and maps, who benefited by these experiments. Perhaps the Greeks and Romans would have improved by the telescope, sooner than we ; for the distance and positions of places which they have left us, intitle us to make this supposition. Monsieur

de Lisle, who detected more faults in the modern geographers, than these have discovered in the ancients, has shewn, that it was a mistake of the moderns, when they censured the ancients with respect to the distance they fixed between Sicily and Afric, as likewise with regard to some other points of geography.

The last of those discoveries, which have so vastly contributed to enrich the natural sciences, is that of the weight of the air. This rescues our philosophers from such errors, as those, who were ignorant of it, gave into, by attributing the effects of the weight of the air to the horror of a vacuum. It has likewise given birth to the invention of the barometer, and to all the other instruments or machines, that produce their effect by virtue of the weight of the air, and by which so great a number of philosophical truths have been demonstrated.

The celebrated ^{*}Galileo had observed indeed, that the attracting pumps raised the water thirty two feet high ; but he attributed this elevation, so opposite to the motion of heavy bodies, to the horror or dread of a vacuum, in the same manner as his predecessors had done, and as the present philosophers would likewise do, were it not for the fortuitous discovery I am going to speak of. In 1643 Torricelli, mechanic professor of the great duke Ferdinand II, observed in some experimental essays, that when a tube stopt at the upper orifice, and open underneath, was kept standing upright in a vessel full of quicksilver, the quicksilver remained suspended to a certain height in the tube, and thus suspended.

[†] Deceased in 1642.

fell directly into the vessel, if the upper orifice were opened. This was the first experiment made on this subject, and was called the experiment of the vacuum; but the consequences that attended it, have rendered it famous. ^a Torricelli finding his experiment very curious, communicated it to his friends, but without referring it to its real cause, which he had not yet discovered.

Father Mersenne, a Minim of Paris, celebrated among the philosophers of that time, was informed of this experiment by letters from Italy as early as 1644, upon which he made it public in France. Monsieur Petit, and M. Pascal, the father of the author of the provincial letters, made several experiments in consequence of that of Torricelli. M. Pascal, junior, made his likewise, and published them in a treatise printed 1647. No one had yet thought of explaining these experiments by the weight of the air. This is an uncontestable proof that the learned did not proceed from one principle to another, and in a speculative way to the discovery of this truth. Experiments gave a fortuitous knowledge of it to philosophers, who so little dreamed of the gravity of the air, that they handled it, as it were, for a long time, without being able to comprehend it. This truth fell in their way by chance, and it seems also, that by mere chance they took notice of it.

We are positively assured by ocular witnesses who have written on this subject, that M. Pascal ^b had no knowledge of the idea of the weight of the air,

^a *Saggi d'esperienze fatte nell' Academia del Cimento, pag. 23.*

^b *Preface to his treatise on the equilibrium of liquors.*

which

which Torricelli hit upon at length by dint of repeating his experiment, till after he published the above-mentioned treatise. M. Pascal found this explication very pleasing ; but as it was only a simple conjecture, he made several experiments to know the truth or falsity of it, and one of those was the famous experiment made in 1648 on the *Puis de Domme*, a very high mountain in France. At length he composed his treatises of the equilibrium of liquors, and of the weight of the air, which have been printed several times. After that M. Guericke, burgo-master of Magdeburg, and Mr Boyle found out the pneumatic machine, and others invented those instruments that mark the different changes which the variations of the weather produce in the weight of the air. The rarefactions of the air have given likewise some insight into those of other liquids. Let the reader judge therefore by this recital, the truth of which no one can dispute, whether it was the learned doubts and speculations of philosophers, that led them on from one principle to another, to the experiments which discovered the weight of the air. In reality, the share which reasoning had in this discovery, does no great honor to it. I shall not speak here of inventions unknown to the ancients, but whose authors are known to us, such as that of cutting the diamond, which was found out by a goldsmith of Bruges under Lewis XI^a, before which time they used to prefer coloured stones to diamonds. None of these men were philosophers, not even of the peripatetic school.

^a *The history of precious stones, by BERQUEN, p. 15.*

'Tis therefore evident from what has been here mentioned, that the knowledge we have in the natural sciences, and which the ancients had not, and that the truth likewise which is found in our reasonings on several physical questions, and could not be found in theirs, are all owing to hazard and fortuitous experiments. The discoveries that have been made by this means, have, if I may say so, been a long time a shooting up. It was necessary that one discovery should wait for another, to produce all the fruit it was able to give. One experiment was not sufficiently conclusive without another, which was not made till a long time after the first : And the last inventions have thrown a surprizing light upon the knowledge which preceded them. Happily for our age, it has found itself in the maturity of time, when the natural sciences were making the most rapid progress. The lights resulting from the preceding inventions, after having made separately a certain progression, began to combine about fourscore or a hundred years ago. We may say of our age what Quintilian said of his^a, *Antiquity has instructed us by so many precepts and examples, that no other age seems to have been so happy as ours, for whose improvement the learned of past ages have so carefully laboured.*

For example, the human body was well enough known in Hippocrates's time, to give him a vague notion of the circulation of the blood, but was not as yet sufficiently laid open to let this great man into a

^a *Tot nos præceptoribus, tot exemplis instruxit antiquitas, ut posset videri nulla sorte nascendi ætas felicior quam nostra, cui docendæ priores elaboraverunt.* QUINT. Inst. l. 12. c. 11.

clear knowledge of that truth^a. It appears by his writings, that he has rather guessed than understood it, and that far from giving a distinct explication to his cotemporaries; he had not a clear idea of it himself. Servetus, a person so well known for his impiety and his punishment^b, coming several ages after Hippocrates, had a much distincter notion of the circulation of the blood, and has given a very clear description of it in his preface to the second edition^c of the book, for which Calvin had him burnt at Geneva. Harvey coming sixty years after Servetus, has been able to give us a more distinct explication of the principal circumstances of the circulation. The greatest part of the learned of his time were convinced of the truth of his opinion, and they even established it in the world, as much as a physical truth, which does not fall under the senses, can be established ; that is, it passed for a more probable sentiment than the contrary opinion.

The public assent to philosophical reasonings cannot go further ; for mankind either by instinct, or principle, place always a great difference between the certainty of natural truths, known by means of the senses, and the certainty of such as are known only by the way of reasoning. The latter appear to them as mere probabilities. 'Tis necessary to place at least some essential circumstance within the reach of their senses, in order to convince them fully of these truths. Wherefore, tho' the greatest

^a Almeloveen Invent. Nov. ant.

^b He was executed at Geneva in 1553.

^c WOTTON preface to reflections upon ancient and modern learning.

part of the natural philosophers, as well as of the public, were convinced in 1687 of the certainty of the circulation of the blood, yet there were still a great many learned men who had drawn a considerable party into their opinion, that this circulation was a mere chimæra. In the medical school of the university of Paris, theses were held at that very time against this opinion. At length the microscopes were perfected to that degree, that by their assistance one might see the blood run with rapidity thro' the arteries towards the extreme parts of the body of a fish, and return more slowly thro' the veins towards the center; and this as distinctly, as we can see from Lyons the Rhone and the Saone run within their banks. No body would attempt now to write or maintain a thesis against the circulation of the blood. 'Tis true, that those who are persuaded at present of this circulation, have not all of them seen it themselves; but they know it is no longer proved by arguments, but by ocular demonstration. Men (I repeat it again) are more apt to give credit to those who tell them, *I have seen it*, than to such as say, *I have concluded*. Now the doctrine of the circulation of the blood, by the lights it has given with regard to the circulation of other liquors, and by the discoveries it has been the cause of, has contributed more than any other observation, to improve anatomy. It has even improved other sciences, such as botany. Can it be denied, but that this doctrine gave great lights to Monsieur Perrault the physician, with regard to the circulation of the sap in trees and plants? I leave it to any man to judge, what share the philosophi-
cal

cal spirit born within these hundred years, could have had in the establishment of this dogma.

The truth, or opinion, of the motion of the earth round the sun, has had the same fate as that of the circulation of the blood. Several ancient philosophers were acquainted with this truth, but as they had not the same means in hand as we have, to prove it, it remained a dubious point, whether Philolaus, Aristarchus, and other astronomers, were in the right to make the earth turn round the sun ; or whether Ptolomy and his followers had reason to make the sun turn round the earth ? Ptolomy's system seemed to prevail, when Copernicus undertook, in the sixteenth century, to maintain Philolaus's opinion with new proofs, or at least seemingly such, which he drew from observations. The world was divided once more, and Tycho Brahé set up a middle system, to reconcile the astronomical facts which had been at that time demonstratively shewn, to the opinion of the immobility of the earth. About that time navigators began to sail round our globe, and soon after it was known that the easterly winds blew continually between the tropics in both hemispheres. This was a physical proof of the opinion which makes the earth turn on its axis, from west to east in four and twenty hours, and finish its course thro' the Zodiaç in a year. Some time after this the telescope was invented ; and by the help of this instrument such evident obser-vations were made on the appearances of Venus and the other planets, such a resemblance was discovered between the earth and those planets, which

which turn on their axis and round the sun, that the public is at present convinced of the truth of Copernicus's system. About sixty years ago, there was not a professor in the university of Paris, that would venture to teach this system. At present almost every body teaches it, at least as the only hypothesis, that can explain the astronomical phænomena of which we have a certain knowledge. Before these principal truths were set in a proper light, the learned, instead of going from this point to make new discoveries, lost their time in wrangling. They spent it in maintaining the opinion which they embraced either thro' choice or hazard, by proofs that could never be good or solid when supplied by argumentation alone; whilst the natural sciences made no manner of progress. But as soon as these truths were demonstrated, they led us, as it were, by the hand to an infinite number of other discoveries; and enabled philosophers, that had any sense, to employ their time usefully in compleating their knowledge by experiments. If our predecessors therefore had not the same knowledge, as we have, 'tis because they had not the clue which guides us thro' the labyrinth.

In fact the sense, penetration, and extent of mind, which the ancients shew in their laws, their histories, and even in their philosophical questions, where (thro' a weakness so natural to man and into which we fall every day) they have not given their own reveries for truths, which they could have no knowledge of in their days, as the accident to which their discovery was owing had not yet happened: All this together, I say, induces us to think, that their

reason was capable of making the same use as ours of the great truths, which experience has revealed to us within these two centuries. Not to stray from our subject, did not the ancients know as well as we, that this superiority of reason, which we call the philosophical spirit, ought to preside over all arts and sciences? Have not they acknowledged that it was a necessary guide? Have not they said in express terms, that philosophy was the mother of the polite arts? *Nor are you ignorant*, says Cicero^a to his brother, *that philosophy so called by the Greeks, is by the learned esteemed the source and parent, as it were, of all commendable arts.*

Let those who attempt to answer me, reflect seriously on this passage, before they conclude I am in the wrong: For one of the defects of our critics is to reason before they have reflected. Let them recollect also (a thing they seem to have forgot) what the ancients have observed with respect to the study of geometry, *which improves even those who do not intend to profess it*^b, and that Quintilian has wrote a whole chapter on the utility which even orators themselves may draw from the study of this science. Does not he say there in express terms, “ There is this difference between geometry and the other arts, “ that these are of no service ‘till after they “ are learnt, but the study alone of geometry is “ of great utility, by reason that nothing is more “ proper for opening, extending, and giving strength

^a *Neque enim te fugit, laudatarum omnium artium procreatrixem quandam & quasi parentem, eam quam philosophiam Græci vocant, ab omnibus doctissimis judicari.* CIC.

^b *Quæ instruit etiam quos sibi non exercet.*

“ to

" to the mind, than the method of geometri-
" cians ^a."

Indeed, to conclude that our reason is of a different stamp from that of the ancients, or to affirm that it is superior to theirs, because we are more learned than they in the natural sciences, is the same as if we were to infer that we had more understanding than they, because we know how to cure intermitting fevers with the bark, which they could not; when all our merit in this cure is owing to our having learnt of the Indians of Peru, the virtue of this medicine which grows in their country.

If we excel the ancients in some sciences independent of the fortuitous discoveries made by hazard and time, this superiority proceeds from the same cause, which makes a son die richer than the father, on supposition that their conduct has been equal, and fortune has favored them both alike. If the ancients had not cleared away the weeds, as it were, from geometry, the moderns born with a genius for this science would have been obliged to employ their time and talents in grubbing them up; and as they would not consequently be so much advanced upon their first setting out, they would never be able to reach as far as they have done. The marquis de l'Hopital, Mr. Leibnitz, and Sir Isaac Newton, would never have pushed geometry so far, had they not found this science in a state of perfection, which was owing to its having been cultivated by a

^a *In geometria partem fatentur esse utilem teneris iestatibus, agitari namque animos & acui, & ingenia ad percipiendi facilitatem venire inde concedunt: sed prodeesse eam non ut cæteras artes cum perceptæ sint, sed cum discatur, existimant.* QUINT. Inst. l. 1. c. 18.

great number of ingenious men, who had improved successively by the lights and discoveries of their predecessors. Had Archimedes appeared in the time of Newton, he would have done as much as Newton, as the latter would have done the same as Archimedes, had he appeared in the time of the second Punic war. We may likewise presume, that the ancients would have made use of algebra in their geometrical problems, if they had had as convenient cyphers for arithmetical calculations as the Arabic; by the help of which Alphonsus X, king of Castile, made his astronomical tables in the thirteenth century.

'Tis also certain, that we are frequently mistaken, when we accuse the ancient philosophers of ignorance; for the greatest part of their knowledge was lost with the writings that contained it. As we have not the hundredth part of the books composed by Greek and Roman authors, we may be easily mistaken in fixing the limits as we do to their progress in the natural sciences. The critics bring charges very often against the ancients merely thro' ignorance. Has not our present age, by its superior knowledge over the preceding generations, justified Pliny the elder with regard to several reproaches of error and falsity which were brought against him a hundred and fifty years ago.

But (some will be apt to reply) it must be allowed at least, that logic or the art of thinking is much completer in our days than in former times, and that it must follow of necessity, that the moderns who have learnt this logic, and have formed themselves by its rules, reason on all subjects with greater exactness than the ancients.

I answer in the first place, 'tis not absolutely certain that the art of thinking is completer in our days than in former ages. Most of the rules which are looked upon as new, are implicitly contained in Aristotle's logic, where we find the method of invention, and that of doctrine. Besides, had we the explication of the rules which the philosophers delivered to their disciples, perhaps we should find there what we imagine we have invented, as it has happened to famous philosophers to find in manuscripts a part of the discoveries, of which they fancied themselves the principal authors. Were we even to grant that logic is somewhat more perfect at present than it was formerly, yet the learned, generally speaking, would not reason better now than in those times. The justness with which a person lays down his principles, draws consequences, and proceeds from one conclusion to another, depends more on the character of his mind, whether volatile or sedate, rash or circumspect, than on the logic he has learnt. 'Tis imperceptible in practice, whether he has studied Barbey's logic, or that of Port Royal. The logic he chanced to learn, does not make as much difference perhaps, with respect to his manner of reasoning, as arises from the weight of an ounce taken from or added to a quintal. This art rather serves to shew us how we reason naturally, than to influence the practice, which, as I have already observed, depends on each person's particular character of mind. Is it observed, that those who are best versed in logic, I mean in that of Port Royal, and even whose profession it is to teach it, are the people who reason most consequentially,

tially, and make the most judicious choice of principles proper for laying the basis of their conclusions? Does a young man of eighteen years of age, who knows by heart all the rules of syllogism and method, does he, I say, reason more justly, than a person of forty, who never knew them, or has entirely forgot them? Next to the natural character of the mind, 'tis experience, or the extent of discoveries, and the knowledge of facts, which enables one man to reason better than another. Now the sciences in which the moderns reason better than the ancients, are exactly those wherein the former know several things, which the latter born before the fortuitous discoveries above-mentioned, could not possibly have been acquainted with.

In effect, (and this is my second anfwer to the objection drawn from the perfection of the art of thinking) we do not reason better than the ancients in history, politics, or morals. Not to mention remoter writers, have not Commines, Machiavel, Mariana, Fra Paolo, Thuanus, D'Avila, and Guicciardin, who wrote when logic was not in a more perfect state than in former ages, have not they, I say, penned their histories with as much method and good sense, as all thoſe historians who wrote within these sixty years? Have we ever an author to compare to Quintilian for the order and solidity of his reasonings? In fine, were it true that the art of reasoning is more perfect in our times than it was formerly, our philosophers would agree better with one another than the ancient philosophers.

It will be here objected, that 'tis no longer allowable to lay down principles but such as are clear and

and well proved. 'Tis no longer permitted to draw a consequence from thence, unless it is clearly and distinctly deducible. A consequence of a greater extent than the principle from whence it was drawn, would be immediately observed by every body, so as to be treated as a ridiculous conclusion. I answer, that a Chinese who had no other knowledge of our age but from this picture, would imagine that all our learned are of one opinion. Truth is one, he would say, and 'tis impossible now to mistake it. All the ways by which a person may be led astray, are stopt up. These ways are to lay down wrong principles of an argument, or to infer a wrong consequence from just principles. How then is it possible to err? All the learned therefore, of whatever profession, must be at length of one opinion. They must all agree what are those things whereof men cannot as yet discover the truth; they should likewise be all of the same sentiment where the truth of things can be known: And yet people never disputed more than they do at present. Our learned, as well as the ancient philosophers, are agreed only in respect to facts, and they refute one another upon every thing that cannot be known but by way of argumentation; treating each other as persons who are wilfully blind, and refuse to see the light. If they do not dispute any longer with regard to some theses, 'tis because facts and experience have obliged them to agree in respect to those points. I embrace here so many different professions under the name of philosophy and sciences, that I dare not name them all. All of them, tho' guided by the same logic, must be sometimes mistaken with respect

respect to the evidence of their principles; or else they must chuse such as are improper for their subject, or in fine they must sometimes infer wrong consequences. Those who extol so highly the lights which the philosophical spirit has shed on our age, will answer perhaps, that they understand by our age only themselves and their friends, and that we must look upon such as are not of their opinion in every thing, as people like the ancients, who understand nothing of philosophy.

We may apply the emblem of time, which discloses the truth only by slow degrees, to the present state of the natural sciences. If we see a greater portion of truth than the ancients, 'tis not because we are clearer sighted, but time has discovered more. I conclude therefore that those works whose reputation has maintained itself against the remarks of past critics, will always preserve it, notwithstanding the subtle observations of future censors.

C H A P. XXXIV.

That the reputation of a system of philosophy may be ruined. And that this cannot happen to a poem.

TH O' the physics of the schools and Ptolemy's system are now exploded, it does not from thence follow that Homer's Iliad, or Virgil's Æneid can meet with the like treatment. Those opinions whose extent and duration are founded on sense, and on the inward experience, as it were, of such as have always adopted them, are not subject to be exploded,

exploded, like philosophical opinions, whose extent and continuance are owing to the facility with which they are received upon other men's credit and authority. As the first authors of a philosophical system may be mistaken, so they may impose upon their followers successively from generation to generation. Posterity may therefore reject at length, as an error in philosophy, what their ancestors looked upon a long time as truth, and which even they themselves imagined to be such upon the authority of their masters.

Men, whose curiosity extends much further than their lights, are always desirous of knowing what opinion they should be of with respect to the cause of several natural effects; and yet the most part of them are incapable of examining or discovering by themselves the truth of these matters, supposing it even within the reach of their eye. On the other hand there are always reasoners amongst them, vain enough to imagine they have discovered these physical truths; and others so insincere as to affirm they have a distinct knowledge of them by principles, tho' they are sensible that their light is mere darkness. As both the one and the other set themselves up for masters, what is the consequence? The smatterers receive as a certain truth, whatever is delivered to them as such by persons in whose favor they are prejudiced thro' different motives, without knowing or even examining the merit and solidity of those proofs with which they support their philosophical dogmas. The disciples are persuaded that those persons are better acquainted with the truth than others, and that they have no design to de-

ceive

ceive them. Their first followers contrive afterwards to get new eleves, who imagine frequently that they are strongly convinced of a truth, of which they do not understand one single proof. Thus it is, that an infinite number of false opinions on the influence of the stars, the ebbing and flowing of the sea, the presage of comets, the causes of distempers, the organisation of the human body, and on several other physical questions, have been established. 'Tis thus the system taught in the schools under the title of Aristotle's physics, was generally received.

The great number therefore of such as have followed and defended an opinion in physics established by authority, or by a confidence in other people's knowledge, the number also of ages in which this opinion prevailed, prove nothing at all in its favor. Those who adopted this opinion received it without inquiry ; or, if they inquired, they were not so successful in their researches, as persons who having examined it after them, improved by the new discoveries, or even by the faults of their predecessors.

It follows therefore, that with respect to physics and other natural sciences, posterity are very much in the right not to depend on the sentiments of their ancestors. Hence a man of sense and learning may impugn several principles of chymistry, botany, physics, medicine, and astronomy, which during the space of many centuries, were regarded as uncontested truths. He is allowed (especially when he can alledge some experiment in favor of his sentiment) to attack these principles with as little restraint and ceremony, as if he were to fight only against a system of four days standing, such as one of those sys-

tems which are not as yet believed but by the author and his friends, who cease to give their assent to it, as soon as they begin to quarrel with him. No man can establish an opinion so well by reasoning and conjecture, but another with more penetration or good luck may subvert it. Hence it is, that the prepossession of mankind, in favor of a philosophical system, does not even prove it will continue thirty years. Men may be disabused by truth, as they may pass from an ancient error to a new one more capable of deceiving them than the first.

Nothing therefore is more unreasonable, than to lay a stress on the suffrage of ages and nations, in order to prove the solidity of a philosophical system, and to maintain that the vogue it has at present will last for ever; but 'tis prudent to lay a stress of this sort to evince the excellence of a poem, or to maintain that it will be always admired. A false system may, as I have already observed, surprize the world, it may prevail for several ages; but this cannot be said of a bad poem.

The reputation of a poem is determined by the pleasure it affords the reader, and established by the senses. Wherefore as the opinion of this poem's being an excellent work, cannot be riveted nor spread but by means of an inward conviction arising from the very experience of those who receive it, we may alledge the time it has lasted, for a proof that this opinion is founded on truth itself. One has even good grounds to maintain that future generations will be moved with reading a poem, which has affected all those in past ages that have been able to read it in the original. There is only one supposition

position admitted in this reasoning, which is, that men of all ages and countries resemble one another with respect to the heart.

People are not therefore so much exposed to be duped in point of poetry, as with respect to philosophy ; and a tragedy cannot, like a system, make its fortune without real merit. Besides, we see that persons who are not agreed with regard to those things, whose truth is examined by way of argumentation, are nevertheless of one opinion in respect to matters decided by the sense. No body complains of these decisions ; that Raphael's transfiguration, for instance, is an admirable picture, and that Polyeuctes is an excellent tragedy. But philosophers rise up every day in opposition to those who maintain, that *the search after truth* is a work in which the truth is taught. Philosophers in general do justice to the personal merit of Descartes, yet they are divided with regard to the goodness of his philosophical system. Besides, men, as we have before observed, frequently adopt the system they profess, upon other people's credit ; and the public voice, which declares in their favor, is thus composed of echoes, that repeat only what they have heard. The small number that chance to tell their own sentiments, mention no more than what they have seen amidst their prejudices, the influence of which is as strong in opposition to reason, as it is weak in opposition to sense. Those who speak of a poem, say what they felt themselves while they were reading it ; and thus each person gives the judgment he has formed on his own experience. Now we are seldom deceived with respect to truths that fall under the senses, as

we are with regard to things that cannot be decided but by way of reasoning.

We are not only right in deciding things which can be judged by the senses, but moreover 'tis impossible for others to deceive us in these matters. Our senses oppose a person, who would attempt to make us believe that a poem which we found insipid is capable of engaging us ; but they do not contradict a person who endeavours to make us take a bad argument in metaphysics for a good one. 'Tis only by an effort of mind, and by reflections which some for want of lights, and others thro' laziness, are incapable of, that we are able to know its falsity, and unravel its error. We know without meditating, nay, we even feel the contrary of whatever a person says, who intends to persuade us, that a work which gives us a vast deal of pleasure, violates those rules that have been established in order to render a work capable of pleasing. If we are not learned enough to answer his reasonings, at least an inward repugnance hinders us from giving any credit to them. Men are all born with a conviction, that every argumentation which tends to persuade them to think the contrary of what they feel, can be nothing but a sophism.

A poem therefore which has pleased in all ages and nations, is really worthy of pleasing, notwithstanding what defects may be observed in it ; and consequently it ought always to be agreeable to such as understand it in the original..

Prejudice (some will here say) is almost as capable of seducing us in favor of a poem, as in favor of a system.

system. For example, when those who are charged with the care of our education, admire the *Aeneid*, their admiration causes a prejudice, which makes us think it a better work than it really is. They engage us by the influence they have over us, to think as they do. Thus we are taught to embrace their sentiments ; and 'tis to prejudices like these that Virgil and the authors who are commonly called *classics*, are indebted for the greatest part of their reputation. Critics may therefore cast a blemish upon this reputation, by sapping the foundation of those prejudices which exaggerate the merit of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and make his eclogues appear so superior to others, which in reality do not fall very short of them. This argument may be enforced with a methodical dissertation on the force of prejudices which mankind imbibe in their infancy ; a common place well known to all the world.

My answer is, that such prejudices as these here in question, would never be able to subsist long in the minds of such as had imbibed them, unless they were founded on truth. Their very experience and senses would soon disabuse them. Upon supposition that during our infancy, and at a time when we have no knowledge of other poems, they had inspired us with a veneration for the *Aeneid* which it did not deserve, we should shake off this prejudice as soon as we began to read other poems, and to compare them with the *Aeneid*. In vain we should have been told a thousand times during our infancy, that the *Aeneid* charms all its readers, we should not be im-

posed upon any longer, if it afforded us but very little pleasure, when we became capable of understanding it of ourselves. 'Tis thus the disciples of a professor, who had taught that the declamations which go by Quintilian's name, are superior to Cicero's orations, would throw off this prejudice, as soon as they attained to a sufficient maturity to be able to distinguish between these performances. The errors in philosophy which we have brought away with us from the college, may always stick to us, because we cannot be undeceived but by a very close meditation, which we are often incapable of making. But it would be sufficient to read those poets, whose merit had been exaggerated, to get rid of our prejudice, unless we were absolute fanatics. Now, we not only admire the *Aeneid* as much in our full maturity of judgment, as during our infancy, and when the authority of our masters might impose upon our tender reason; but moreover our admiration continually increases, in proportion as our taste improves, and our lights become more extensive.

Besides, 'tis an easy matter to prove historically and by a deduction of facts, that Virgil and the other excellent poets of antiquity, are not indebted to colleges, nor to early prejudices, for their first admirers. This opinion cannot be maintained except by a person who does not carry his reflections beyond his own time and country. The first admirers of Virgil were his own countrymen and contemporaries; among whom there were numbers of women, and men engaged in the hurry and occupations

tions of life, less learned perhaps than those who fabricate the reputation of poets after their own fancy, instead of searching for it in the writings of the ancients. When the *Æneid* first appeared, it was rather an assembly-book, if I may say so, than a work designed for the use of a college. As it was written in the living language of that time, women therefore as well as men, the ignorant as well as the learned, perused it, and passed their judgments according as it affected them. The name of Virgil was not imposing; but his book was exposed to all the affronts to which a new performance can be subject. In short, Virgil's cotemporaries judged of the *Æneid*, as our fathers judged of Boileau's satyres, or of La Fontaine's fables upon the first publication of these works. It was therefore the impression which the *Æneid* made upon the public, and the tears which the women shed upon the reading of it, that gave it the character of an excellent poem. This approbation was changed into admiration as early as Quintilian's time, who wrote about ninety years after Virgil. Juvenal, Quintilian's cotemporary, informs us, that even in his time children were taught already to read Horace and Virgil.

*Dum modo non pereat totidem olfecisse lucernas,
Quot stabant pueri, cum totus decolor esset
Flaccus, & bæreret nigro fuligo Maroni.*

Juv. sat. 7.

*Then thou art bound to smell on either hand
As many stinking lamps, as school-boys stand;*

Where

Where Horace could not read in his own sully'd book :

And Virgil's sacred page is all besmear'd with smoke.

MR. CHARLES DRYDEN.

This admiration has always continued to increase. Five hundred years after Virgil, and at an age when the Latin was still a living language, people mentioned this poet with as much veneration, as his greatest admirers can speak of him in our days. Justinian's institutes^a, the most respectable of all profane books, inform us that the Romans always meant Virgil when they said the word *poet* absolutely, and by way of preference, as the Greeks constantly understood Homer when they used the same expression.

Virgil therefore is not indebted to translators or commentators for his reputation. He was admired before there was any necessity for translating him, and 'tis the success of his verses that was the first occasion of his being honored with commentators. When Macrobius and Servius commented or explained him in the fourth century, according to the most probable opinion, they could not bestow much greater encomiums upon him than those which he received from the public. Otherwise these encomiums would have been contradicted by every body, as the Latin was still the living language of those for whom Servius and Macrobius wrote. The same may be said of Eustatius, Asconius Pedianus, Donatus, Acron and other ancient commentators, who

^a *Cum poetam dicimus nec addimus nomen, subauditur apud Græcos egregius Homerus, apud nos Virgilius.* Inf. I. i. tit. 2.

published their comments, when people still spoke the language of the Greek or Roman author, who was the subject of their labors.

In fine, all the modern nations that were formed in Europe after the destruction of the Roman empire by the Barbarians, have set a value upon Virgil's writings, in the same manner as the contemporaries of that poet. These people, so different from one another with regard to language, religion, and manners, united all of them in their sentiments of respect for Virgil as soon as they began to be polished, and became capable of understanding him. They did not look upon the *Aeneid* as an excellent poem, because they had been taught at an university to admire him ; for they had no universities at that time ; but because they found it an excellent poem upon the reading of it, they all agreed to make the study thereof a part of the polite education of their children.

As soon as the northern nations acquired settlements in the territories of the Roman empire, and learnt the Latin tongue, they began to have the same taste for Virgil as the contemporaries of that amiable poet. I shall be contented with producing only one example. Theodoric, the first king of the Visigoths established in Gaul, and cotemporary of the emperor Valentinian III, ordered his son Theodoric II to apply himself to the study of Virgil. The latter Theodoric, writing to the celebrated Avitus, who was proclaimed emperor in 455, and who pressed him to make up matters with the Romans, says to him as follows :

— *Parvumque ediscere jussit
Ad tua verba pater, docili quo prisca Maronis
Carmine molliret Scythicos mibi pagina mores.*

SID. Apoll. carm. sept.

" I have too many obligations to you, to refuse
" any thing you demand. Was it not you that
" had the care of instructing me in my youth, and
" that explained Virgil to me, when my father in-
" sisted upon my applying myself to the study of
" this poet ? " Sidonius, who relates this fact,
was son-in-law to Avitus.

'Tis the same with respect to the other famous poets of antiquity. They wrote in the vulgar language of their country, and their first admirers gave them an approbation which was not subject to error. Since the settlement of the modern nations in Europe, not one of them has preferred the poems composed in their own language to the works of those ancient poets. Those who understand the poetry of the ancients, are all agreed as well in the north as the south of Europe, in catholic as in protestant countries, that they are more moved and taken with them, than with poems composed in their own native language. Can it be supposed that the learned of all ages entered into a whimsical conspiracy to sacrifice the glory of their countrymen, most of whom they had no knowledge of but by their books, to the fame of Greek and Roman writers, who had it not in their power to requite them for their prevarication ? The persons here mentioned could not be ingenuously mistaken, because they were to give an account of their

own

own sense and feeling. The number of those, who have expressed themselves differently, is so inconsiderable, as not to merit the name of an exception. Now if there can be any dispute with respect to the merit and excellence of a poem, it ought to be decided by the impression it has made on all men during the course of twenty centuries.

The philosophical spirit, which is nothing but reason strengthened by experience, whereof the name alone would be new to the ancients, is of great service in composing books which instruct people to avoid mistakes in writing, as also in detecting those that have been committed by an author ; but it misguides us in judging of a poem in general. Those beauties in which its greatest merit consists, are better felt than found out by rule and compass. Quintilian did not make a mathematical calculation or a metaphysical discussion of the real and relative faults of those, on whom he has passed a judgment adopted by all ages and nations. 'Tis by the impression they make on the reader, that this great man has defined them ; and the public, which has constantly used the same method of judging, has always conformed to his opinion.

In fine, in things which belong to the jurisdiction of the sense, such as the merit of a poem ; the emotion of all men who have and still do read it, as well as their veneration for the work, amount to as strong a proof as a demonstration in geometry. Now 'tis on the strength of this demonstration, that people are so passionately fond of Virgil and other poets. Wherefore men will not change their opinion on this point, till the springs of the human

human machine are altered. The poems of those great authors will not appear indifferent performances, till the organs of this machine be so changed, as to find a bitterness in sugar, and a sweetnes in wormwood. People will answer the critics, without entering into a discussion of their remarks, that they are already sensible of the faults of those poems they admire ; but still they will not change their opinion, tho' they were to see some more. They will answer, that the countrymen of these great poets must have observed several faults in their works, which we are incapable of discovering. Their works were written in a vulgar language, and their countrymen knew an infinite number of things that are now forgot, which might have afforded subject for several well-grounded criticisms. And yet they admired those illustrious authors as much as we do. Let our critics confine themselves therefore to write against such commentators as would fain make beauties of those faults, of which there is always a large number in the very best performances. The ancients are no more answerable for the puerilities of these commentators, than a fine woman ought to be accountable for the extravagancies into which the blindness of passion throws her unknown admirers.

The public has a right of leaving such reasonings as conclude contrary to their experience, to be discussed by the learned, and to stick to what it certainly knows by way of sensation. Their own sense, confirmed by that of former ages, is sufficient to persuade them, that all those reasonings must be false, and they continue very quietly in their opinion,

nion, waiting till somebody takes the trouble of giving us a methodical account of their errors. For instance, a physician, who is a man of parts and a great logician, writes a book to prove, that vegetables and fish are as wholesome nourishment as flesh in our country and climate. He lays down his principles in a methodical manner ; his arguments are well drawn up, and seem conclusive ; and yet no body is convinced of the truth of his proposition. His cotemporaries, without giving themselves the trouble of detecting the source of his error, condemn him upon their own experience, which sensibly convinces them, that flesh is with us an easier and wholesomer food than fish and vegetables. Men know very well, that 'tis easier to dazzle their understanding, than to impose upon their senses.

A person who attempts to defend an established system or opinion, undertakes a subject that does not excite greatly the curiosity of his cotemporaries. If this author writes ill, no body thinks him worth mentioning ; if he writes well, people will say, that he exposed in a sensible manner what they knew already. But to attack an established system, is the thing which presently distinguishes an author. 'Tis not therefore in our days only that men of letters have endeavoured, by attacking received opinions, to acquire the reputation of men of a superior knowledge, born to prescribe and not to receive laws from their cotemporaries. All the established opinions in literature have sustained repeated attacks. There is not so much as one celebrated author but what

what some critic has attempted to degrade; and we have seen writers maintain, that Virgil was not the author of the *Æneid*, and that Tacitus did not write the history and annals that go under his name. Whatever can be alledged to diminish the reputation of the excellent works of antiquity, has already been wrote, or at least asserted: And yet they continue in the hands of all mankind; no more exposed to be degraded than to perish, a misfortune which great part of them has suffered by the devastaions of Barbarians. The art of printing has multiplied too many copies, and were Europe to be so ravaged as to lose them all, still the libraries of the European colonies in America, and the remote parts of Asia, would preserve those precious monumets to posterity.

But to return now to the critics. When we observe any defects in a book which is generally acknowledged to be an excellent piece, we must not imagine ourselves the first that have descried them. Perhaps the ideas that occur to us then, presented themselves before to several others, who at the first motion would have been willing to have published them the very same day, in order to undeceive the world immediately of its old errors. A few reflections made them defer attacking the general opinion so very soon, which to them appeared a mere prejudice; and a little meditation made them sensible, that their imagining themselves more clear sighted than others, was owing to their own ignorance. They were convinced at length, that the world had some reaon to think as it did for so many ages; that if the reputation of the ancients could have been pos-
sibly

sibly diminished, the dust of time would have fullied it long ago ; and in short, that they had been imposed upon by an inconsiderate zeal.

A young man who enters upon a considerable em-
ployment, sets out with censuring the administration
of his predecessor. He cannot comprehend how people
of sense and prudence could have commended him ;
wherefore he proposes to put a stop to vice, and to
promote virtue in a more effectual manner. The ill
success of his endeavors to reform abuses, and to es-
tablish that order and regularity of which he had form-
ed the idea in his cabinet, the knowledge also which
experience furnishes him, by which alone he can be
instructed, will soon convince him that his predecessor
managed right, and the public had reason to applaud
him. In like manner our first meditations preju-
dice us sometimes against the received opinions of
the republic of letters ; but a course of more seri-
ous reflections on the manner in which these op-
inions were established, likewise a more extensive
and distincter knowledge of what men are capable
of doing, and in fine, even our own experience re-
conciles us to these opinions. A French painter of
twenty years of age, who goes to Rome to study,
does not see at first in Raphael's works a merit equal
to their great reputation. He is sometimes so vola-
tile and unguarded as to publish his sentiment ; but
within the space of a year, when a little reflection
has brought him over to the general opinion, he is
vexed for having expressed himself in that manner.
'Tis owing to ignorance, that people recede some-
times from the common opinion in things, the me-
rit of which may be known by all mankind. No-

thing, says Quintilian², is more odious than those who knowing only something more than the first elements of letters, are puffed up with a vain and conceited notion of learning.

C H A P. XXXV.

Of the idea which men have of the writings of the ancients, when they do not understand the originals.

AS for those who are not acquainted with the languages, in which the poets, orators, and even the historians of antiquity have wrote, they are incapable of themselves to judge of their excellency; wherefore if they are desirous of having a just idea of the merit of those works, they must take it from the relation of persons who have and do understand these languages. Men cannot judge right of an object, when they are not able to form their judgment by the report of the sense destined to know it. We cannot give our opinion of the goodness of a liquor 'till after we have tasted it, nor of the excellency of a tune, 'till we have heard it. Now a poem written in a language we do not understand, cannot be known to us by the report of the sense appointed to judge of it. 'Tis impossible for us to discern its merit by means of that sixth sense we have spoken of. 'Tis the business of this

² Nihil est peius iis qui paululum aliquid ultra primas litteras progressi, falsam sibi scientiae persuasionem induerunt. QUINT. I, 1. c. 2.

sense to know whether the object presented to us, be moving and capable of engaging us ; as it belongs to the ear to judge whether the sounds are pleasing, and to the palate, whether the taste is agreeable.

All the critical discourses in the world are no more capable of conveying a just idea of the merit of Horace's odes to a person that does not understand Latin, than a relation of the qualities of a liquor which we had never tasted, would be able to give us a right notion of the taste of that liquor. Nothing can supply the report of the proper sense for judging of the thing in question. The ideas which we form to ourselves from other people's reasoning and discourse, resemble the notion a blind man has formed to himself of colors : Or we may compare them to the ideas which a person who had never been sick, may have formed of a fever or cholic.

Now, as a person who has never heard a particular air or tune, is not admitted to dispute with regard to its excellence, against those who have heard it ; and as a man who never had a fever, is not allowed to contest the impression made by this distemper, with those who have been afflicted with it ; in like manner he who does not understand the language in which a poet has wrote, ought not to be allowed to dispute with such as understand this poet, concerning his merit and the impression he makes. To dispute with regard to the merit of a poet and his superiority over other writers, is it not disputing in relation to the different impression which their poems have on their readers, and to the emotion they cause ? Is it not disputing of the truth of a natural fact, a ques-

tion on which people will always give credit to ocular witnesses who are uniform in their report, preferable to all those who should attempt to contest the possibility thereof by metaphysical arguments?

Since men therefore, who do not understand the language the poet has writ in, are incapable of passing a judgment upon his merit, and upon the rank due to him; is it not more reasonable they should adopt the judgment of such as have and do understand him, than embrace the opinion of two or three critics who affirm that the poem does not make such impression upon them, as every body else says it does? I take no notice here but of the sensitive decisions of critics, for I reckon analyses and discussions for nothing in a subject which should not be determined by the way of reasoning. Now those critics who say, that the poems of the ancients do not make the same impression upon them, as upon the rest of mankind, are one against a hundred thousand. Should we take any notice of a sophist, who would attempt to prove, that those who feel a pleasure in wine, have a depraved taste, and would corroborate his arguments by the example of five or six abstemious persons, that have an aversion to this liquor? Those who are capable of understanding the ancients, without relishing them, are in as small a number with respect to their admirers, as men who have a natural aversion to wine are in comparison to such as love it.

We must not be imposed upon by the artifices of the *despisers of the ancients*, who strive to justify their disrelish by the authority of such learned men, as have observed mistakes in the finest works

of antiquity. These gentlemen, so dextrous in the art of falsifying the truth without lying, would fain make us believe that the learned are of their party. Here in one sense they are in the right; for in questions relating to matters of fact, as that of knowing whether the reading of a particular poem be engaging or not, men judge commonly according as the courts of judicature are accustomed to determine; that is, they pronounce always in favor of a hundred witnesses, who depose they have seen a fact, in opposition to all the arguments of a small number who say they have not seen it, and even aver it to be impossible. The *despisers of the ancients* are intitled to appeal to the authority of these critics only, who have advanced, that the ancients were indebted to old mistakes and gross prejudices, for a reputation of which their defects rendered them undeserving. Now the catalogue of these critics might be comprised in two lines, while whole volumes would scarce contain the list of critics of the opposite taste. In fact, to attack so general a consent, and to give the lye to so many past ages, nay, even to our own, one must suppose that the world has but just got over its infancy, and that we are the first generation of rational men that the earth has yet produced.

But some will ask me, whether the translations made by learned and able writers, do not enable those, for example, who do not understand Latin, to judge of themselves and even by their senses of Virgil's *Æneid*?

I answer, that Virgil's *Æneid* done into French, falls, as it were, under the very sense which would

have judged of the original poem; but the *Aeneid* in French is not the same poem as in the Latin. A great part of the merit of a Greek or Latin poem consists in the numbers and harmony of the verses; and these beauties, tho' very sensibly felt in the originals, cannot be transplanted, as it were, into a French translation. Even Virgil himself would be incapable of transplanting them; especially as our language is not so susceptible of those beauties as the Latin, pursuant to what we have observed upon this subject in the first part of this work. In the second place, the poetic style (of which we have discoursed at large also in the first part, and which decides almost entirely the success of a poem) is so disfigured in the very best translation, that it has scarce any traces left to distinguish it.

'Tis difficult to translate an author with purity and fidelity, even an author who relates nothing but facts, and with the greatest simplicity of style, especially when he has composed in a language more favorable for nervous and accurate expressions, than that into which we attempt to translate him. 'Tis therefore vastly difficult to render any writer into French, who composed in Greek or Latin. Let the reader therefore judge whether it be possible to translate the figurative style of those poets who have wrote in Greek or Latin, without enervating the force of their style, and stripping it of its greatest ornaments.

Either the translator takes the liberty of changing the figures, and of substituting others which are used in his own language, instead of those employed by the author; or else he renders those figures word for word, and preserves the very same images in his copy, which

which they represent in the original. If he changes the figures, 'tis no longer the original author but the translator that is speaking to us. This must certainly be a great loss, even were the translator (which very seldom happens) to have as much sense and genius as the original author?

'Tis natural for us to express our own idea better than that of another person. Besides, 'tis very rare, that the figures which are considered as relative in the two languages, have exactly the same meaning; and even when they have the same meaning, they may happen not to have the same dignity. For example, to express a thing that surpasses the power of man, the Latins would say, *Clavam Herculi extorquere*; but the French would say, *Prendre la Lune avec les dents*². Is the simplicity and grandeur of the Latin proverb, so well expressed by the French figure?

The loss is every bit as great, at least to the poem, when the translator gives the figures word for word. In the first place, 'tis impossible for him to render the words exactly, without being frequently obliged to use epithets either to restrain or extend their signification. Words which necessity makes us oftentimes consider as synonymous, or relative in Latin and French, have not always the same propriety, nor the same extent of signification; and 'tis this propriety which frequently forms the exactness of the expression, and the merit of the figure which the poet has employed. The French translate generally the Latin word *Herus* by that of *Maitre*, tho' the latter does

² That is, to lay hold of the moon with one's teeth.

not include exactly the sense of the Latin, which properly signifies a master with regard to his slave. The translator is therefore obliged sometimes to use a circumlocution, in order to convey the sense of a single word, which drawls out the expression, and renders the phrase languid and heavy in the version, tho' it might have been very lively in the original. The same may be said of Virgil's phrases, as of Raphael's figures. Alter but ever so little of Raphael's contour, and you take away the energy of the expression, and the noble air of the head. In like manner, if Virgil's expression be ever so little changed, his phrase assumes so different a form, that we find no longer the expression of the original. Tho' the French word *Empereur* is derived from that of *Imperator*, are we not obliged by the different extent of the signification of these two words, to employ frequently a circumlocution to point out precisely the sense in which we use the word *Empereur*, in translating *Imperator*? Some of our best translators have even chosen to adopt in a French phrase the Latin word *Imperator*.

Besides, may not a word, which bears exactly the same signification in the two languages, be nobler in one than in the other, when considered as a simple sound, and taken independent of the idea fixt to it; insomuch that one shall find a low word in the translation, when the author used a graceful one in the original. Is the word *Renaud* in French as graceful as *Rinaldo* in *Italian*? Does not *Titus* sound better than *Tite*?

Again, words translated from one language into another, may be degraded and sustain some damage, as

as it were, with respect to the idea affixed to the word. Does not the word *Hospes* lose a part of the dignity it has in Latin, (where it signifies a man united to another by the strictest ties of friendship, a man so closely connected with another as to be able to make the same use of his friend's house as of his own) when it is rendered into French by the word *Hôte*, which commonly signifies a person who entertains or is entertained by others for the sake of money? 'Tis the same with words, as 'tis with men. To imprint veneration, 'tis not sufficient to shew themselves sometimes in honorable significations or functions; 'tis necessary moreover that they never appear in low functions, or mean significations.

In the second place, supposing a translator has succeeded so as to render the Latin figure in its full strength, yet it will frequently happen that this figure will not make the same impression upon us, as it did upon the Romans for whom the poem was composed. We have but a very imperfect knowledge of things whose figures are borrowed. Were we even to have a compleat knowledge of them, still we should not, for reasons I am going to lay down, have the same taste for those things as the Romans had; wherefore the image that represents them, cannot affect us as much as it did the Romans.

Thus the figures borrowed from the arms and military machines of the ancients, cannot make the same impression upon us as they did upon them. Can the figures drawn from the combat of gladiators strike a Frenchman who knows nothing of, or at least who never saw the combats of the amphitheatre,

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as much as the Romans, who were so taken with those spectacles as to be present at them several times in a month? Is it to be supposed, that the figures borrowed from the orchestra, from the choruses and dances of the opera, could affect such as never saw this spectacle, as much as they strike those who go to the opera every week? Does the figure, *to eat his bread under the shade of his fig-tree,* make the same impression upon us, as it does upon a Syrian almost continually tormented by a scorching sun, and who finds an infinite pleasure in laying himself down to rest under the shade of the large leaves of this tree, the best shelter he can find amongst all the trees in the fruitful plains of his country? Can the northern nations be as sensible of all the other figures which describe the pleasure of a cool shade, as the people who live in hot countries, and for whom these images were invented? Virgil and the other ancient poets would have employed figures of an opposite taste, if they had wrote for the northern nations. Instead of drawing the greatest part of their metaphors from a brook whose cool streams quench the traveller's thirst, or from a grove spreading a delightful shade on the brink of a fountain, they would have taken them from a good warm stove, or from the effects of wine and spirituous liquors. They would have chosen to describe the sensible pleasure which a man, who is almost stiff with cold, feels upon approaching the fire; or the slower but more agreeable sensation he finds in putting on a coat lined with good comfortable fur. We are much more affected with the description of such pleasures

pleasures as we feel every day, than with the picture of pleasures we have never or but seldom tasted. As we are indifferent in respect to delights which we never wish for, we cannot be sensibly affected by the description of them, were it drawn even by Virgil. What charms could a great many people of the north, (who never drank a drop of pure water, and who have only an imaginary knowledge of the pleasure described by the poet) what charms, I say, could they find in the following verses of Virgil's fifth eclogue, which entertain us with so delightful an image of the pleasure a man feels, when oppressed with toil, he composes himself to sleep on the green turf; or of the sweet sensation a traveller who is burnt with thirst, finds in quenching it with the cool waters of a crystal fountain?

*Quale sopor fessis in gramine, quale per aestum
Dulcis aquæ saliente fitim restinguere rivo.*

VIRG. eclog. 5.

*As to the weary swain with cares opprest,
Beneath the sylvan shade, refreshing rest :
As to the fev'rish traveller, when first
He finds a crystal stream to quench his thirst,*

DRYDEN.

This is the fate of most of those images, which the ancient poets adopted with so much judgment, to engage their contemporaries and countrymen.

Besides, an image that is noble in one country, may be low and mean in another. Such is that which a Greek poet gives us of the ass, an animal which in his country is smooth and well made, whereas in ours 'tis a wretched creature. Besides, this animal

mal is in those parts saddled and mounted by the principal people of the nation, and frequently honored with gold trappings ; whereas among us it is always miserably harnessed, and abandoned to the meanest drudgery of the populace. Let us hear, for instance, what a missionary writes with relation to the opinion they have of asses in some parts of the East-Indies^a. *We meet with asses here as well as in Europe. You would not imagine, madam, that we have here an intire breed, which is pretended to descend in a right line from one ass, and is even very much honored upon that account. You will say, perhaps, that this breed must be one of the very meanest. Not at all, madam, 'tis the king's.* Would it be right to pass judgment on a poet of that country, by the ideas we have formed of him from a French translation ? Had we never seen any other horses but those of the peasants in the isle of France, should we be so affected as we are, with all those figures which give a pompous description of a courser ? But, you'll say, one ought to allow a poet, who is criticized in a translation, all the figures and prosopopæias that are founded on the customs and manners of his country. I answer in the first place, that this is never done. I do not think that it proceeds from prevarication, and I accuse the critics only of not having a sufficient knowledge of the manners and customs of different people, to be able to judge what figures are authorized or not in a certain poet. In the second place, these figures are not only excusable, but they are beautiful in the original.

In fine, let us only inquire of those who know how to write in Latin and French. They will answer, that the energy of a phrase, or the effect of a figure, are so inherent, as it were, in the words of the language in which one has invented or composed, that they are incapable of translating their own writings to their mind, or of giving the original turn to their own thoughts, when translating them from French into Latin, and much less when they render them from Latin into French. Images and strokes of eloquence lose always some part of their beauty and strength, when transplanted from the language in which they had their origin.

We have as good translations of Virgil and Horace, as translations can be. And yet those who understand Latin, never fail to tell us, that these versions do not give us an idea of the merit of the originals ; and their testimony is still corroborated by the general experience of people who are led by the agreeableness of books in their choice of reading. Those who are versed in the Latin tongue, are never satiated with reading Horace and Virgil ; while such as cannot read these poets but in translations, find so little entertainment, that they have occasion for a great deal of resolution to read the *Aeneid* thro' ; and cannot help being surprized that the originals are read with so much pleasure. On the other hand, persons who are astonished, that works which charm them so much in the originals, should be so tiresome to such as peruse the translations, are as much in the wrong as the former. They ought both to reflect, that those who read Horace's odes in French, do not read the same poems as people who read them

them in Latin. My reflection is so much the more just, as one cannot learn a language, without picking up at the same time a knowledge of several things relating to the manners and customs of the people who spoke it, which gives us an insight into the figures and style of the author, of which those who have not such lights, must be deprived.

How comes it, that the French have so little relish for the translations of Ariosto and Tasso, tho' the reading of the *Rolando Furioso*, and the *Gierusalemme liberata*, justly charms such Frenchmen, as have a sufficient knowledge of the Italian, to understand without difficulty the originals ? What is the reason that the same person who has read Racine's works six times over, cannot go thro' with the translation of Virgil, notwithstanding those who understand Latin have read the Æneid ten times, for thrice they have perused the tragedies of the French poet ? 'Tis because it is natural for every translation to give a bad copy of the greatest beauties of a poem, while it faithfully represents the defects of the plan and characters. The merit of things in poetry is almost always identified (if I be allowed the expression) with the merit of the expression.

Those who read history for instruction, lose only the beauties of the historian's style, when they read him in a good translation. The principal merit of an historian does not consist like that of a poet, in moving ; nor is it his style that chiefly engages us to his work. Events of importance are interesting of themselves, and truth alone furnishes them with the pathetic. The chief merit of history is to enrich our memory, and to form our judgment ; but

that

that of a poem consists in moving us, and 'tis the very charm of the emotion that makes us read it. Wherefore the principal beauty of a poem is lost when we do not understand the poet's own select expressions, and when we do not behold them in the order in which he ranged them to please the ear, and to form images capable of moving the heart.

In effect, let us change the words of the two following verses of Racine which we have already cited.

*Enchaîner un captif de ses fers étonné,
Contre un joug qui lui plait vainement mutiné.*

*To lead a captive at his chains surpriz'd,
Rebelling vainly 'gainst a pleasing yoke.*

And let us say, still keeping to the figure : *To lay a prisoner of war in irons, who is surprised thereat, and acts in vain the mutineer against an agreeable yoke*; the verses would lose the harmony and poetry of their style. The same figure presents no longer the same image ; and the painting exhibited in Racine's verses is dawbed over, as it were, as soon as the terms are displaced, and the definition of the word is substituted instead of the word. Those who want to be further convinced how far one word taken for another enervates the vigor of a phrase, even without going out of the limits of the language in which it was composed, let them read the twenty third chapter of Aristotle's art of poetry. The French translators of Greek and Latin poets are obliged to deviate a great deal more from the expressions of the original than I have done in those

verses of Phædra. Persons of the greatest capacity and application are tired with the unsuccessful efforts they make in order to inspire their translations with as much energy as the original, where they find a strength and exactness which they cannot transfuse into their copy. They let themselves at length be led away with the genius of our language, and submit to the fate of translations, after having struggled against it for some time.

Since therefore a translation does not give us the author's select words, nor the arrangement in which he placed them in order to please the ear and to move the heart, we may say, that to judge of a poem in general from the version, is to form a judgment of the picture of a great master, celebrated chiefly for his coloring, from a print in which the strokes of his design are quite lost. A poem loses by a translation its harmony and numbers, which I compare to the coloring of a picture; as also the poetry of the style, which may be compared to the design and the expression. A version is a print, in which nothing remains of the original picture, but the ordonnance and attitude of the figures; and even this is frequently altered.

To judge therefore of a poem by translations and criticisms, is judging of a thing designed to fall under a particular sense, without having any knowledge of it by that sense. But to form an idea of a poem from the unanimous deposition of persons acquainted with the original concerning the impression it makes on them, is the best way to judge, when we do not understand it ourselves. Nothing is more reasonable than to suppose, that the object would make the

same impression upon us, as it does on them, were we as susceptible of this impression. Is it likely we should listen to a man, who should attempt to prove by plausible arguments, that the picture of the marriage of Cana, done by Paolo Veronese, which he never saw, cannot be so agreeable, as people say it is, who have seen it ; by reason that it is impossible a picture should please, when there are such a number of defects in the poetic composition of the work, as are observed in this of Paolo Veronese ? We should desire the critic to go and see the picture, and we should rely on the uniform relation of those that saw it, who protest it has charmed them notwithstanding its defects. In fact, the uniform report of the senses of other men, is the surest way, next to the report of our own, to judge of things which fall under a sensitive perception. This we are sufficiently convinced of, and it will be impossible ever to stagger human belief or opinion founded on the uniform report of other peoples senses. A person cannot therefore, without an inexcusable temerity, assert with confidence, when the question relates to a poem he does not understand : That the opinion which men have of its excellence, is only a prejudice of education founded on *applauses*, which, upon tracing them to their first origin, we find for the most part to be no more than *echoes* to one another^a ; and 'tis still a higher degree of rashness to compose the imaginary history of this prejudice.

^a *Discourse on Homer*, p. 122.

C H A P. XXXVI.

Of the errors which persons are liable to, who judge of a poem by a translation, or by the remarks of critics.

WHAT should we think of an Englishman, supposing that any of them could be so indiscreet, who, without understanding a word of French, should attempt to arraign the Cid upon Rutter's translation², and pronounce judgment at length, that the fondness of the French for the original must be attributed to the prejudices of their infancy? We should tell him, that we are better acquainted than he is with the imperfections of the Cid, but that he cannot have our sensibility of the beauties which make us admire it, in spite of all its faults. In fine, we should say unto this presumptuous judge, whatever a persuasion founded on sense suggests, when we cannot readily recollect the proper reasons and terms for making a methodical refutation of propositions, whose error offends us. 'Tis difficult in such a case for the most moderate persons to contain themselves from breaking out into some harsh expressions. Now those who have learnt Greek and English are very sensible, that a Greek poet rendered into French, suffers a great deal more by the version, than a French poet translated into English.

² Printed in 1637.

All the judgments and parallels that can be made of those poems, which are understood only by translations and critical dissertations, lead us infallibly to false conclusions. Let us suppose, for instance, the Maid of Orleans and the Cid to be translated into the Polish tongue, and that one of the learned of Cracow, after having perused these translations, passes judgment on those poems by way of examen and discussion. Let us suppose, that after having made a methodical inquiry into the plan, the manners, the characters, and the probability of the events, whether in the natural or supernatural order, he decides at length the value of those two poems; he will certainly determine in favor of the Maid of Orleans, which in an operation of this nature will appear a more regular poem, and less defective in its kind, than the Cid. If we should likewise suppose, that this Polish reasoner persuades his countrymen, that a person is capable of judging of a poem written in a language he does not understand, by reading the translation of it with critical remarks, they will certainly conclude, that Chapelain is a better poet than the great Corneille. They will treat us as people who are slaves to prejudices, for not submitting to their decision. What shall we therefore think of a proceeding which leads men naturally to this sort of judgments?

C H A P. XXXVII.

*Of the defects we imagine we see in the poems
of the ancients.*

AS for those defects we fancy we see in the poems of the ancients, and which we sometimes tell so dexterously at our fingers ends, 'tis possible we may be often and several ways mistaken. Sometimes we may censure the poet, as defective in his composition, for having inserted several things which the time he lived in, and the respect due to his cotemporaries, obliged him to mention. For instance, when Homer composed his Iliad, he did not write a fabulous story, that left him at liberty to forge the characters of his heroes as he had a mind, or to give the events what success he pleased, and to imbellish certain facts with all the noble circumstances his imagination could suggest. He undertook to write in verse, a part of the events of a war, which the Greeks his countrymen had waged against the Trojans, whereof there was still a recent tradition remaining. Pursuant to the common opinion, Homer flourished about a hundred and fifty years after the siege of Troy, and according to Sir Isaac Newton's chronology ^a he lived still nearer to the time of that war, and might have seen several persons, who knew Achilles, and the other illustrious heroes of Agamemnon's army. I grant therefore that Homer, as a poet, ought to have treated the events in a different manner from that of a simple

^a Chronolog. p. 95. and p. 162.

historian.

historian. He should have introduced the marvelous as much as it was reconcileable to probability, according to the religion of those times. He ought to have imbellished those events with fictions, and to have done, in short, whatever Aristotle^a commends him for having performed. But Homer, in quality of a citizen and historian, and as a writer of ballads or songs, that were destined chiefly to serve as annals to the Greeks, was frequently obliged to render his recitals conformable to the knowledge the public had of those facts.

We see by the example of our ancestors, and by the present practice in the North of Europe and some parts of America, that the first historical monuments of nations, for preserving the memory of past events, as well as for exciting men to the most necessary virtues in growing societies, are drawn up in verse. The people therefore, tho' yet rude and ignorant, compose a kind of songs to celebrate the praises of such of their countrymen as rendered themselves worthy of imitation, which they sing on several occasions. Cicero^b informs us, that just after Numa's time, the Romans were come into the practice of singing songs at table in praise of illustrious men.

The Greeks had their beginnings, like other people, and were an infant society before they grew up to be a polished nation. Their first historians were all poets; wherefore Strabo^c and other ancient writers inform us, that even Cadmus, Pherecides^d, and

^a Poetic. cap. 24.

^b Tusc. 1. 4.

^c Geogr. lib. 1.

^d Versum nexus repudiato, conscribere ausus passivis verbis Pherecides. APUL. FLOR. 1. 4.

Hecateus, the first who wrote in prose, made no alteration in their style but with regard to the measure of the verse. History preserved for several ages among the Greeks some remains of its origin. Most of those who wrote afterwards in prose, retained the poetic style, and preserved for a long while even the liberty of mixing the marvelous in their events. *The Greek historians*, says Quintilian^a, *assume a kind of liberty almost equal to that of poets.* Homer is not one of those first writers of songs above-mentioned ; he did not appear till some time after them.

— *Post hos insignis Homerus,
Tirtæusque mares animos in Martia bella
Versibus exacuit.* — HORAT. de arte.

*Next Homer and Tyrtæus boldly dare
To whet brave minds, and lead the stout to war.*

C R E E C H.

But people were accustomed in his time to look upon poems as historical monuments. Homer would have therefore been to blame, had he changed certain characters, or altered some known events, and especially if he had omitted in the enumerations of his armies, the heroes who went upon that memorable expedition. We may easily imagine the complaints their descendants would have made against the poet.

Tacitus relates that the Germans used to sing, at the time when he wrote his annals, the exploits of Arminius, who was dead fourscore years before. Were the authors of those Cherufcan songs at liberty

^a *Græcis historiis plerumque poeticae similis ineſt licentia.* QUINT.
Inst. 1. 2. cap. 4.

to contradict public and known facts, and to suppose, for example, in order to do more honor to their hero, that Arminius never took the oath of allegiance to the Roman eagles which he defeated? When those poets spake of the interview on the banks of the Weser, between him and his brother Flavius, who served in the Roman army, was it possible for them to finish the conference with decency and gravity, when every body knew that the German general and the Roman officer abused one another in presence of the armies of both nations, and would have come to blows were it not for the river that was between them?

Let us take another example that will strike us better. History and poetry are in our days two very different professions. We have historians to read when we are desirous of being informed with regard to the truth of facts ; and we seek merely for amusement in the reading of poets. Chapelain wrote his Maid of Orleans at a much greater distance of time from the event he sung, than that which was between the taking of Troy by the Greeks, and the time when Homer composed his Iliad. And yet can we imagine that Chapelain was at liberty to treat and embellish the character of the principal characters as he pleased ? Could he represent Agnes Sorel as a violent and sanguinary maid, or as a person without any elevation of mind, and who had advised Charles VII to live with her in obscurity ? Would he have been allowed to give this prince the known character of the count de Dunois ? Would it have been right of him to change the events of combats and sieges according

to his fancy ? Was it possible for him to conceal some known circumstances of his actions, which are not so much to the honor of Charles VII ? Had he done any thing of all this, tradition would have stood up, and contradicted him. Besides, as we have shewn in the first part of this work, nothing is a greater enemy to probability (which is the very soul of fiction) than to see the fiction contradicted by facts that are generally known.

If Homer's heroes do not draw their swords and fight as often as they quarrel, 'tis because they had not the same notions with regard to point of honor, as the Goths and the like barbarous nations. The Greeks and Romans who lived before the general corruption of their countrymen, were less afraid of death than the English of our times ; but it was their opinion, that a groundless contumely dishonored only the person that pronounced it. If the contumely contained a just charge, their sentiment was, that the person affronted had no other method of repairing his honor, than that of reforming his manners. Those polite nations never dreamt, that a duel which is to be decided by chance, or at the most by a skill in fencing which they considered as the profession of their slaves, was a proper method of justifying one's self, with regard to a reproach, which frequently does not so much as concern a person's bravery. The advantage gained, proves only that one is a better gladiator than his adversary, but not that he is exempt from the vice with which he is charged. Was it fear that hindered Cæsar and Cato from cutting one another's throats, after Cæsar expos'd in a full Senate-house a billet-doux

that had been sent him by Cato's sister? The manner in which they both encountered death, is a sufficient proof they were not afraid of it. I do not remember to have read either in the Greek or Roman history any thing that resembles the Gothic duels, except an accident that happened at the funeral games, which Scipio Africanus gave under the walls of new Carthage in honor of his uncle and father, who had both lost their lives in the Spanish wars. Livy ^a relates, that the champions were not common gladiators hired from the merchant, but barbarians, such as Scipio perhaps was very glad to get rid of, and who fought against one another thro' different motives. Some of them, says the historian, agreed to terminate their disputes by the sword. The Greeks and Romans, who were so passionately fond of glory, never imagined it a dishonorable thing for a subject to wait for satisfaction from public authority. It was reserved therefore for those people, whom misery drove from their northern snows, to believe that the best champion must of necessity be the honestest man, and that the name of government could with justice be given to a society, in which the rules of honor obliged fellow-citizens to revenge their real or pretended injuries by force of arms. If Quinault does not make Phaeton ^b draw his sword in the conversation between him and Epaphus, 'tis because he introduces two Ægyptians upon the stage, and not two Burgundians or Vandals.

The prejudice therefore which the greatest part of mankind have for their own times and country, is a

^a Liv. hist. l. 28.

^b Opera of Phaeton. act 3.

fertile source of false remarks as well as of wrong judgments. They take what is practised there for a rule of what ought to be always and every where observed. And yet there is only a small number of customs, or even of virtues and vices, that have been praised or condemned in all times and countries. Now poets are in the right to practise what Quintilian advises orators, which is to draw their advantages from the ideas of those for whom they compose, and to conform to them ^a. Wherefore we should transform ourselves, as it were, into those for whom the poem was written, if we intend to form a sound judgment of its images, figures and sentiments. The Parthian, who after being repulsed in the first charge, flies back full gallop, in order to take a better opportunity, and not to expose himself in vain to the enemy's darts, ought not to be looked upon as guilty of cowardice; because this manner of fighting was authorized by the military discipline of that nation, founded on the idea they had of courage and real valour. The ancient Germans, so celebrated for their bravery, were also of opinion, that to retreat upon some occasions, in order to return with more vigor to the charge, was rather a prudent than cowardly action ^b.

We have seen Homer condemned for giving an elegant description of the gardens of king Alcinoüs, not unlike, say some people, to those of an honest vine-dresser or gardener in the neighbourhood of Pa-

^a *Plurimum refert quæ sint audientium mores, quæ publicè recepta persuasio.* QUINT. Inst. l. 3. cap. 9.

^b *Cedere loco dum rursus instes, magis consilii quam formidinis arbitrantur.* TAC. de mor. Germ.

ris. But allowing this to be true, that the designing of a fine garden is the task of an architect, and to plant it at a very great expence, the merit of a prince ; still 'tis the poet's business to give a good description of such as are planted by the people of his time. Homer is as great an artist in the description he gives of the gardens of Alcinoüs, as if he had entertained us with that of the groves of Versailles.

After reproaching the ancient poets for filling their verses with common objects and ignoble images, several think themselves very moderate, when they lay the fault they have not really committed, to the age they lived in, and pity them for having had the misfortune of appearing in a time of rusticity and ignorance.

The manner in which we live, if I may say so, with our horses, prejudices us against the speeches with which men address these animals in the poems of the ancients. We cannot bear that their master should speak to them in the same manner almost, as a huntsman speaks to a hound. But these discourses were very suitable in the Iliad, a poem written for a nation, among whom a horse was, as it were, a fellow-boarder with his master. They must have been agreeable to a people, who supposed such a knowledge in horses as we do not allow them, and who frequently used to talk in that manner to those creatures. Whether the opinion which admits beasts to have some degree of reason bordering upon that of man, be false or no, this is no business of the poet. His task is not to purge his age of its errors in physics, but to give a faithful description of the customs and

and manners of his country, in order to render his imitation as likely as possible. Homer, in this very passage for which he has been so frequently censured, would still have pleased several nations of Asia and Afric, who have not changed their ancient method of managing their horses, no more than several other customs.

I shall give here an extract from Busbequius, ambassador from the emperor Ferdinand I, to the Grand Signor Soliman II, concerning the manner of managing their horses in Bithynia, a country not far from the Greek colonies of Asia, and bordering upon Phrygia, where the great Hector was born, whom some of our critics would strike speechless for speaking to his horses. *I observed*, says he, ^a *in Bithynia, that every body, even the very peasants, treat their colts with great tenderness; that when they want them to do any thing, they caress them as we do children; and that they let them go to and fro about the house. Nay, they would be glad to make them sit down to table. The grooms dress their horses with the same gentleness, for 'tis by stroking and almost by persuasion they manage them, and they never beat them but in cases of extremity. Wherefore they contract a kind of friendship for men, and 'tis very rare they kick up their heels, or grow vicious in any other manner. In our countries they are bred up in a very different way. The grooms never enter the stables without storming against them, and never think they dress them well, unless they give them a hundred blows, a treatment which makes them fear and hate mankind. The Turks teach their horses also*

^a BUSBEQU. Legat. Turc. epist. 3.

to kneel down, that they may mount them with more ease. They teach them to pick up a stick or a sword from the ground with their teeth to present it to the rider, and they put silver rings in the nostrils of such as have been thus taught, as a kind of distinction, in recompence for their docility. I have seen some of them learn to stand in the same place, without being held by any body, after the rider had dismounted; and others go thro' their exercizes of themselves, and obey all the commands of the riding masters, who stood at some distance. Mine, says Busbequius some lines lower, give me a good deal of diversion every evening. They are led into the court, and the horse I call by his name, looks at me stedfastly and neighs. We have got acquainted by means of some slices of melon, which I myself put into their mouths. 'Tis likely this was not effected, without the ambassador's making some of those speeches to his horses, which were capable of drawing upon him the censure of our critics.

There is no body in the republic of letters, but has heard of the chevalier d'Arvieux^a, a gentleman famous for his voyages, employments, and oriental learning. I shall not be charged with having cited exceptionable witnesses, to prove that a great many of the Asiatic inhabitants talk still to their horses, as Hector spoke to his in Asia. This gentleman after having discoursed at large, in the eleventh chapter of his relation, concerning the manners and customs of the Arabians, of the docility, and, if I may say so, of the good nature of their horses, and the tenderness and humanity with which their masters treat them, adds what follows. *A merchant of Marseilles*

^a Deceased in 1702.

who lived at Rama, kept a mare in partnership with an Arabian. This mare was called Touyffe, and besides her beauty, youth, and price of twelve hundred crowns, had the merit of being of the principal and noblest race. The merchant had her genealogy and all her lineal descents by father and mother, as high as five hundred years of ancientness; the whole proved by public acts drawn up in the abovementioned form. Abrabim (this is the name of the Arabian) used to go frequently to Rama^a to see how this mare did, whom he was most passionately fond of. I have had several times the pleasure of seeing him weep with tenderness, while he was embracing and caressing her. He used to kiss her on these occasions, and to wipe her eyes with his handkerchief. He rubbed her down with his shirt-sleeves, and gave her a thousand blessings during whole hours that he talked to her. My eyes, my soul, my heart, said he, how hard is my fate to be obliged to let you out to so many masters, without being able to maintain you myself? I am poor, my dear, thou knowest it well. My darling, I reared thee in my own house like my daughter, I never scolded or struck thee, but always caressed thee to the best of my power. God preserve thee my beloved. Thou art handsome, soft, and amiable. God preserve thee from the looks of the envious; and a thousand such like speeches. He used to embrace her then most tenderly, and to go away with his face still towards her, giving her as he retired backward a thousand tender adieus. This puts me in mind of an Arabian at Tunis, where I was sent for the execution of a treaty of peace, who would not deliver up a mare we had

^a A village in Palestine.

bought

bought for the king's stud. When he put the money in his bag, he cast his eyes upon the mare, and began to weep. Is it possible, said he, that after having bred thee in my house with so much care, and after having had so many kind services of thee, in requital I should deliver thee up in slavery to the Franks? No, my darling, my life, I'll be guilty of no such crime. Upon which he flung the money upon the table, and embracing and kissing his mare, he carried her back with him. The relations of the oriental countries are full of stories of this sort. But it is not every where believed, neither has it been always a received opinion, that brutes are nothing more than mere machines. This we must own, is one of the discoveries made by the new philosophy, without the help of experiments, and by mere strength of reasoning. As for its progress, 'tis a thing that every body knows, so that I shall say nothing concerning it.

'Tis not sufficient to know how to write well, in order to be able to give a judicious criticism of ancient and foreign poems, one must have also a knowledge of the subjects they treat of. A thing that might have been very usual in their time, and common in their country, may be contrary nevertheless to probability and reason in the eyes of those censors, who have no knowledge but of their own times and country. Claudian is so surprized that the mules should be obedient to the voice of the mule-driver, that he thinks he can draw an argument from thence to prove the truth of the history of Orpheus.

*Miraris si voce feras placaverit Orpheus,
Cum pronas pecudes Gallica verba regant.*

'Tis

'Tis very probable that Claudian would have had some difficulty to give credit to a thing, which the inhabitants of Provence hardly take notice of, had he never quitted Ægypt, the country in which he is supposed to have been born. Perhaps his countrymen censured him for transgressing in this point against the rules of probability.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

That the remarks of critics on particular poems do not give people a disrelish of them ; and that when they lay them aside, 'tis only in order to read better performances of the same kind.

BE it as it will with respect to those faults, which past and future critics have and shall find in the writings of the ancients ; they will never be able to prejudice the public against the reading of them. They will continue to be read and admired, 'till future poets produce something better. It was not our geometrical critics that gave our ancestors a distaste for Ronsard's poems, and made them lay him aside ; but poems of a far more engaging nature than those of Ronsard's. It was Moliere's comedies that put us out of conceit with Scarron and other poets that preceded him ; and not the books that were wrote in order to detect the defects of those pieces. In case we should be entertained hereafter with better performances than those which are already

dy in the hands of the public, there will be no occasion for critics to come and advise us to quit good for better. People do not want to be instructed with respect to the merit of two poems, as concerning that of two systems of philosophy. They judge and form their discernments of poems by the help of their senses, much better than critics with the assistance of their rules. Those who have a mind to diminish the reputation which the public has for Virgil, and to deprive him of his readers, must favor us first with a better poem than the *Æneid*. They must soar higher than Virgil and his companions, not as the wren that placed himself on the back of the eagle, to take his flight when the bird of Jupiter grew tired, in order to tell him insultingly that he had surpassed him in the heighth of his flight. Let them do it, with the strength of their own wings.

Let them chuse therefore a new subject from modern history, in which they cannot borrow the inventions, nor the poetic phrases of the ancients, but must draw the poetic style and fiction from the fund of their own genius. Let them write an epic poem on the destruction of the league by Henry IV, in which the conversion of this prince, followed by the reduction of Paris, would be naturally the unravelling of the piece. A man that has a sufficient strength of genius for poetry and is able to extract from his own fund all the beauties necessary for sustaining a grand fiction, would find his account much better in treating a subject of this sort, in which there would be no danger of clashing with any other writer, than in handling subjects taken from fable, or from the Greek and Roman histories.

Instead of borrowing therefore their heroes from the Greeks and Latins, let them venture to take them from our kings and princes.

Homer did not sing the battles of the *Æthiopians* or the *Ægyptians*, but those of his countrymen. Virgil and Lucan took their subjects from the Roman history. Let our poets therefore attempt to sing those things we have before our eyes, such as our combats, feasts, and ceremonies. Let them entertain us with poetic descriptions of the buildings, rivers, and countries we see every day, and whose originals we can compare, in a manner, with the imitation. With what grandeur and pathos would not Virgil have treated an apparition of St Lewis to Henry IV, the day before the battle of Yvri, when this prince, the honor of the descendants of our holy king, made profession as yet of the faith of Geneva? With what elegance would he have described the virtues in white robes, conducted by clemency, coming to open to this great prince the gates of Paris? The interest which every body would find in this subject from different motives, would be a sure pledge of the public attention to the work. But the reasons we have given in these reflections, together with past experience, are sufficient to convince us, that the possibility of writing a better epic poem in French than the *Æneid*, is only a metaphysical possibility, such as that of moving the earth by giving a fixt point without the globe.

As long as our modern writers do not excel, nor even equal the ancients, people will always continue to read and admire them, and this veneration

veneration will continually increase without any danger of being diminished by the malicious attempts of envy. We do not admire their works because of their having been produced in certain ages, but 'tis these ages we respect for giving birth to such great performances. We do not admire the Iliad, the Æneid, and some other writings, on account of their having been wrote a long time ago ; but because we find them admirable when we peruse them, and those that understood them, have in all ages admired them ; in fine, because a long series of ages is elapsed, and yet no succeeding rival has rose up to equal those authors in this kind of poetry.

C H A P. XXXIX.

That there are professions, in which success depends more upon genius, than upon the succour which may be received from art ; and others on the contrary in which it depends more upon art than genius. We ought not to infer that one age surpasses another in professions of the first kind, because it excels them in the second.

WHAT has been above said with respect to poets, historians, and excellent orators, must not be understood of all the writers of antiquity. For example, the ancient writings on

those sciences, whose merit consists in extent of knowledge, are not superior to such as the moderns have wrote concerning those very subjects. I should even be as little surprized at a man's shewing no signs of admiration at the extent of the knowledge of the ancients, who had taken his idea of their merit from their works on physics, botany, geography, and astronomy, because his profession obliged him to make his principal study of those sciences ; as at seeing a person who had formed his idea of the merit of the ancients from their works of history, eloquence, and poetry, filled with admiration for those great originals. The ancients were ignorant in the abovementioned sciences, of a great many things which we are well acquainted with ; and led on by the natural itch, which men have of carrying their decisions beyond the limits of their certain knowledge, they fell, as I have already observed, into an infinite number of errors.

Thus an astronomer in our days understands better than Ptolemy those very things which this mathematician knew, and besides he knows all the discoveries which have been made since the time of the Antoninus's, either by the help of voyages, or by the assistance of the telescope. Were Ptolemy to come back into the world, he would become a disciple to the observatory. The same may be said of anatomists, navigators, botanists, and of all such as profess those sciences, whose merit consists more in knowing than in inventing and producing. But there are other professions, in which the last comers have not the same advantage over their predecessors, by reason that the progress they admit of, depends more on the talent

lent of inventing, and the natural genius of the person that practises them, than on the state of perfection in which these professions are, when the person that exercises them, finishes his career. Wherefore the man born with the happiest genius, makes the greatest progress in these professions, independent of the degree of perfection in which they are when he practises them. 'Tis enough for him that the profession he embraces be reduced to art, and that the practice of this art has some kind of method; nay, he may invent the art, and digest the method himself. The strength of his genius, which enables him to guess and imagine an infinite number of things above the reach of ordinary capacities, gives him a greater advantage over men of common understandings, who shall profess this very art after it has been brought to perfection; than they can have over him by the knowledge of new discoveries, and by the new lights with which the art is enriched, when they come to profess it in their turn. The assistance which may be derived from the perfection, to which one of the arts here mentioned has attained, cannot lead ordinary capacities as far, as the superiority of natural lights is able to conduct a man of genius.

Such are the professions of a painter, a poet, a general, a musician, an orator, and even that of a musician. Men become great generals and eminent orators, as soon as they practise these professions with a proper genius, let the state of the arts that instruct them be what it will. The

merit

merit of illustrious artists and of great men, in all the professions abovementioned, depends principally on the portion of genius they have brought with them into the world; whereas that of a botanist, a natural philosopher, an astronomer, and a chemist, depends chiefly on the state of perfection, to which fortuitous discoveries and other people's labor have advanced the science he intends to cultivate. History confirms what I have asserted here, with respect to all those professions, which principally depend on genius.

Among the above-cited professions, that of physic seems to be the most dependent on the state in which a person finds it, when he begins to profess it. And yet when we enter into a strict inquiry concerning this art, we find that its operations depend more on the particular genius, in proportion to which every physician benefits by other people's knowledge as well as by his own experience, than on the state of physic, when he begins to profess it.

The parts of physic are, the knowledge of the distempers, the knowledge also of the remedies, and the application of the remedy suitable to the dis-temper. The discoveries that have been made since Hippocrates's time in anatomy and chemistry, facilitate very much the knowledge of the diseases. We are likewise acquainted in our days with an infinite multitude of remedies which Hippocrates never so much as heard of, and the number of which considerably surpasses that of the remedies which he knew and we have lost. Chemistry has supplied us with part

part of these new remedies, and for the other we are indebted to the countries discovered to the Europeans within these two centuries. Our gentlemen of the faculty are agreed nevertheless, that Hippocrates's aphorisms are the work of a man, who far surpasses, taking him all together, any of our modern physicians. They do not pretend to equal, but are satisfied with admiring his practice and predictions with respect to the course and the conclusion of disorders, tho' he made them with fewer succors than our present physicians have for making their prognostics. There is not one of them that would so much as hesitate, were he to be asked whether he should chuse to be attended by Hippocrates in an acute disorder, (even supposing the extent of Hippocrates's knowledge to be as limited as when he wrote) than by the skilfullest physician of London or Paris. They would all prefer to be in the hands of Hippocrates. This is because the talent of discerning the temperament of the patient, the nature of the air, its present temperature, the symptoms of the disorder, as well as the instinct which makes a person hit upon a suitable remedy, and the critical moment of applying it, depend upon genius. Hippocrates was born with a superior genius for physic, which gave him a greater advantage in practice over modern physicians, than all the new discoveries are able to give the latter over Hippocrates.

'Tis vulgarly thought, that were Cæsar to come back into the world, and to see our fire-

arms and modern fortifications, and in short all our offensive and defensive weapons, he would be exceedingly surprized. He would be obliged, say they, to recommence his apprenticeship, and even to make a very long one before he would be capable of leading two thousand men into the field. Not at all, said marshal Vauban, who was so much the more sensible of the strength of Cæsar's genius, as he had a great share of it himself. Cæsar would be able to learn in less than six months all that we know ; and as soon as he would have learnt the use of our arms, and been acquainted, as it were, with the nature of our arrows and shields, his genius would apply them perhaps to uses which we do not so much as think of.

The art of painting includes at present an infinite multitude of observations and experiments, which were unknown in Raphael's time ; yet we do not see that any of our painters have equalled that amiable genius. Thus, on supposition that we know something relating to the art of disposing the plan of a poem, and of giving a decency of manners to the personages, which the ancients were strangers to ; still they must have excelled us, if it be true that they had a superior genius ; and this so much the more as 'tis certain that the languages in which they composed, were more adapted to poetry than ours. We perhaps shall commit less faults than they, but we shall never be able to reach that degree of excellence which they attained. Our eleves will be better instructed than theirs, but our masters will have far inferior abilities.

Many

Many of these great natural genius's, says one of the best English poets ^a, that were never disciplined and broken by rules of art, are to be found among the ancients, and in particular among those of the more eastern parts of the world. Homer has innumerable flights, that Virgil was not able to reach, and in the Old Testament we find several passages more elevated and sublime than any in Homer.

In fact, Racine appears a greater poet in his Athalia; than in any of his other tragedies, only because his subject being taken from the Old Testament, it authorized him to embellish his verses with the boldest figures and the most pompous images of scripture; whereas he was allowed to make but a very sober use of them in his profane pieces. People listened with respect to the oriental style when spoken by the personages of Athalia, and were infinitely charmed with it. In fine, says the abovementioned English author in some other place, we may be exacter than the ancients, but we cannot be so sublime. I know not thro' what fatality all the great poets of the modern nations are agreed in preferring the compositions of the ancients to any of their own. Indeed, 'tis acknowledging our incapacity of writing in the taste of the ancients, to endeavour to degrade them. Quintilian ^d observes,

^a Spectator. N^o. 160. 3. Sept. 1711.

^b Quos ille non desiterat incessere, cum diversi sibi consciens generis, placere se in dicendo posse iis quibus illi placerent, disfideret. QUINT. Inst. 1. 19.

that Seneca continually disparaged those great men who had preceded him, because he perceived that their writings and his were of so different taste, that either one or the other must be disagreeable to his contemporaries. In fact, it was impossible for them to have any value for the tinsel and pointed style of Seneca's writings, which seemed to forebode a decline of genius; as long as they continued to admire the noble and simple style of the writers of the Augustan age.

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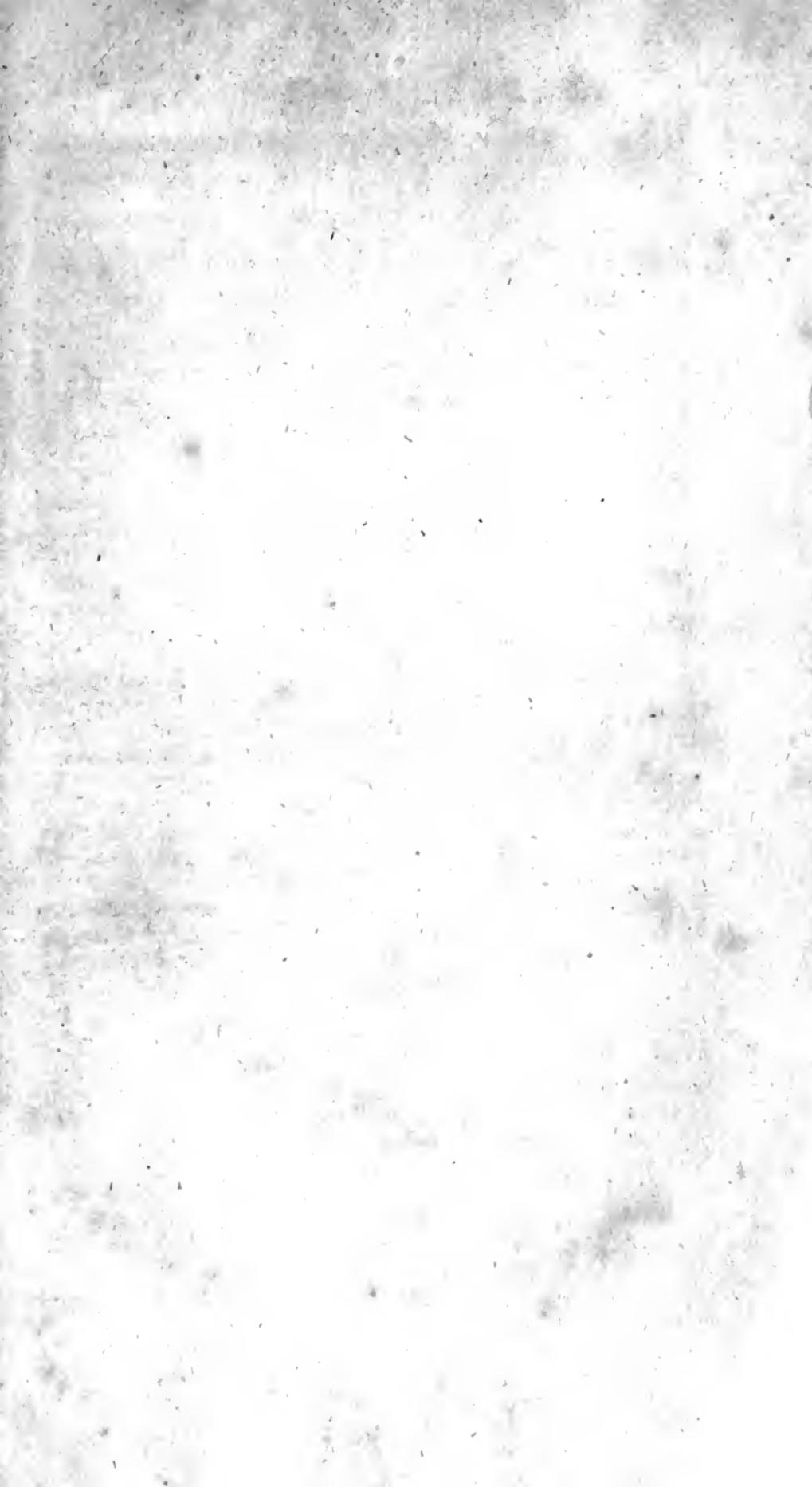
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